V.182 no.22

The Death of Camelot

Henry Fairlie

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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An American Marxist Visits Cuba

by John Womack Jr.

Rogues' Gallery: John Osborne on Agnew, Alan Dershowitz on Liddy

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TRB

from Washington
May 31, 1980

The Fire This Time

When I first came to Washington, a black couldn't eat at a downtown restaurant or take a room at a hotel. The DAR wouldn't let Marian Anderson sing in Constitution Hall so Roosevelt had her sing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Across the Potomac in Virginia the Mason-Dixon line really took hold. Blacks automatically moved to the back of the streetcars; toilets were labeled "White" and "Colored." In Washington, when the play *Green Pastures* came with an all-Negro cast, blacks couldn't buy seats in the orchestra or first balcony. The manager ultimately turned the National Theater into a movie house for a couple of years rather than risk offending the sensibilities of upper-class audiences. And, of course, all over the nation schoolrooms were "separate but equal" by judicial edict, i.e., segregated.

I put this down to show how far we have come. We need perspective. There has been a spasm of civil disorder in Miami, with 16 dead, 371 injured, and parts of the city as burnt out as a battle zone. It is a terrible thing and the nation shudders lest the race riots of the 1960s be repeated. We feel frightened and chastened. Yes, it is there: just beneath the surface in America lies lethal racial tension. But before getting hysterical about it, and doing a lot of things hastily (some of which, of course, we should have done long ago), let us recall briefly what has gone before. America has moved in the right direction on racial issues, though not fast enough. Yet I rather doubt if any other nation could have done what we have done since Emancipation.

When I was a boy the *World Almanac* carried the number of the year's lynchings as a matter-of-fact, statistical table. Three thousand blacks were lynched in the US from the 1880s to the early 1960s: some hung, some burned to death; then the playful southern mobs gave up the practice. The *Almanac*'s statistical table was dropped. Other things have happened. Schools have been desegregated. There are a dozen blacks in Congress. There has been a change even in a dozen years. I doubt whether racist George Wallace could run for president today. (He won 46 electoral votes in 1968 and almost threw the election into the House of Representatives.)

Black racial unrest always takes America by surprise. In the hot summer of 1967 there were 128 disorders, and in 1968 there were 130. What causes them? Are there going to be more now after Miami? Will there be a vengeful white backlash? We have been told the cause of riots so many, many times. We have short attention spans. The most comprehensive report on the disorders of the 1960s was the Kerner report (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders). Poignant testimony came from one of the first witnesses, Dr. Kenneth B. Clark. He said that national commissions have made reports on racial violence in America repeatedly—it grows tiresome. The report on the 1919 riot in Chicago, the one on Harlem of 1935, the one on the new Harlem riot in 1943, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts (California) riot: "It is a kind of *Alice in Wonderland*—with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations—and the same inaction," Clark testified.

The Miami spasm, for example, was set off by the "not guilty" verdict of an all-white jury on behalf of four white policemen accused of beating a black to death for a traffic offense. Twelve years ago the Kerner report cited three factors as being in "the first order of intensity" in setting off a riot: "police practices" led all the others. There's a chapter on police in the report. "The policeman in the ghetto," it says, "is a symbol not only of law, but of the entire system of law enforcement and criminal justice." In short, the cop represents "whitey" in the neighborhood. Other items are unemployment and poverty. What needs to be said here? The Kerner report observed grimly, "This is our basic conclusion: our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." That is stark, but who can look at the figures without recognizing black frustration? Blacks look around them in Miami and see new Cuban refugees welcomed as heroes although, as the *New York Times* reports, "in the last 20 years, Cuban Americans have filled many of the jobs traditionally held by blacks and have prospered, while black poverty and unemployment have increased." (For the moment I pass over Mexican illegals who are seeping over the border, some reckon at a million a year, often at first taking the menial jobs "traditionally held by blacks." Hispanics are expected to outnumber blacks in a few years as America's largest ethnic minority.)

Generalizations are supported by sober statistics. Black unemployment is twice white unemployment; black teenage unemployment may amount to 50 percent in big cities; 24.7 percent of city blacks lived below the poverty line in 1968; today the figure is around 31.5 percent, or a third of the black population. Meanwhile white unemployment is about six percent. And the recession is growing.

Twelve years ago I flew into Washington on the press plane with Robert Kennedy on the day Martin Luther King was murdered. Bulletins came in of riots and looting ahead which we didn't believe. Then we saw Washington spread out calmly in the evening with spirals of smoke rising from downtown. The taxi driver had to be bribed to take us in.

On well-lighted F Street they were breaking the plate glass of a clothing store, and the shoe store had been looted. A crowd of teen-age blacks stood laughing, looking over their shoulders, then darting back at the store again and again like barracuda taking bites at a piece of meat. The glass crashed and a boy handed out things to others. It's odd to see law and order collapse. A police car came by slowly and they all ran for the corner, and were back again when the squad car passed. The burglar alarm at the clothing store rang unheeded: it was calling Civilization. Nobody answered.

Glass crashed and somebody grabbed a tape recorder and ran. Cars were going up and down the street but didn't stop except, curiously, for traffic lights. It didn't seem to be a question of morals but a kind of reckless game. Police threw a canister of tear gas that popped like a firecracker and then began to steam. We ducked and tried to keep ahead of the tentacles. On a sidewalk a black suddenly made a feint at me as though he were a boxer coming out at the bell. I jumped. "Why did you do that?" I demanded. "Wouldn't you, whitey," he cried, trying to look fierce, "if they had just killed your leader?" The alarm bell kept ringing.

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Correspondence

Ranting and Reagan

To the editors:

Professor Robert Tucker's defense of Ronald Reagan's seriousness proceeds from misperception to false conclusion. There are three major difficulties with his view. The first is that Governor Reagan does not seem capable of grasping thoughts as complex as Professor Tucker's. The other day, I had the pleasure of hearing our colleague examine the case for an American-Soviet condominium in the Persian Gulf. Argument of this sort would cause the governor to cry treason: there will be little or no room in his administration for the higher geopolitics. The second difficulty is that Governor Reagan's domestic program is bound to intensify the conflicts and divisions of our society—so much so that we are unlikely to be capable of conducting a consistent, much less a strenuous, foreign policy. The image of community propagated by Reagan (a nation of atoms) does not, in any event, lend itself to large common designs. The third difficulty is that Governor Reagan's foreign policy posturing is likely both to encourage the Soviet Union to believe that it has only a blowhard to deal with, and to accelerate the decomposition of the North Atlantic alliance. On neither assumption could the United States restore the world primacy that some of its citizens think is its moral due.

If Reagan's domestic projects generate turbulence, a newer and larger Huston Plan could be attempted to silence the opposition. The Central Intelligence Agency could be "unleashed" on recalcitrant governments in the other democracies. Again, conditions that may verge upon civil war here and abroad are unlikely to be optimal for that grand program described so magisterially by Professor Tucker.

Norman Birnbaum
Georgetown University Law Center
Washington, DC

Hollywood blacklist

To the editors:

In his review of Dore Schary's *Heyday* (*TNR*, April 19), what Peter Brunette perhaps could not see or know were the canny concealments and attempts to lead the reader away from historical facts and unpleasant truths.

Schary was not summoned to Washington to appear before HUAC in 1947; as a producer he was invited, and the committee hoped to use him. To his credit he refused to play the role they assigned him, and for this Hopper and other right-wingers did indeed castigate him. That's all it took, that verbal abuse. Two weeks later he joined the producers in writing and signing the infamous "Waldorf Decision," which officially instituted the blacklist in Hollywood. Three days later he appeared with Walter Wanger and Eddie Mannix, two producers, before the membership of the Writers Guild, said that he opposed the Waldorf Statement even though he signed it, and urged the guild to support him on this basis: if they would agree to the blacklisting of the 10 men cited for contempt, he would do everything in his power to see that no other writer, director, or actor would be blacklisted. The guild overwhelmingly rejected his deal.

It is true that Hedda Hopper said MGM should change its name to Metro-Goldwyn-Moscow, but that was because until that time they had refused to fire two of the Hollywood 10, Dalton Trumbo and myself, and a third writer who was named, Donald Ogden Steward. When the Waldorf Statement appeared, and we three were fired, Hopper subsided.

As for Schary, he never uttered a word against the blacklist in the years that followed, when hundreds were swept away in the McCarthy rip-tide. As for actually hiring any of those blacklisted, the nearest he came was in 1952-53 when he hired a former member of the Hollywood 10, Edward Dmytryk, one of Hollywood's first stool-pigeons.

Schary's heyday was a gray day for Hollywood.

Lester Cole
San Francisco, California

State employees' woes

To the editors:

I wish to comment on James Ring Adams's article, "The New Labor Monopoly" (*TNR*, May 10). I worked as a custodian for the state of Idaho for two years. The state employees there had a public employees' association which had little more going for it than moral suasion.

To strike was inconceivable. Only fire fighters and teachers had that option on the local level. We did not have arbitration, let alone mediation. Each year was an exercise in suspense as the legislature debated how many layoffs to make and what pay raises to grant, if any. We had a state pension system, but it was instituted in 1959. Most of the custodial staff were older and female—mainly divorced or widowed—part of the group that comprises the poor in America. Is it any wonder that James Farmer called the public employee "the new nigger"?

Tom Lepionka
Somerville, New Jersey

The election of 1912

To the editors:

Nicholas von Hoffman's "Bucking the System" (*TNR*, April 10) was most interesting to me. As a lad just entering high school I lived through the election of 1912. It is true, as the writer says, that President Taft was skunked, but more careful research would have revealed that he carried the states of Utah and Vermont, receiving eight electoral votes.

Herman M. Wessel
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania

The risks of growth

To the editors:

I would like to quibble about the statement " . . . it seems absurd to quibble about whether productive growth is a good thing," which appeared in your editorial, "Saving Capitalism From Its Friends" (*TNR*, April 26). The United States already imports almost half its oil and an increasing amount of its important industrial metals. On a global level we may well run out of eight or more critical non-renewable metals within the next 50 years. Our environment is currently highly polluted with PCBs, asbestos, chlorinated hydrocarbons, and heavy metals, among the many by-products of an industrial society. The increases in pollution are inextricably tied to global industrial growth. Knowledgeable critics have stated that it is quite plausible that we will be in for an epidemic of cancer in the next 20 to 30 years as these by-products make their effects evident. It is even conceivable that we might overstress the biosphere on a local or global level resulting in a catastrophic reduction of plant and animal species—including *homo sapiens*.

In the face of all these potential crises

(continued on page 40)

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts, Vol. 182, No. 22, Issue 3412, May 31, 1980. Published weekly (except the issues of January 5, July 12, August 9, September 13) and distributed by The New Republic, Inc., 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. Phone (202) 331-7494. Single copy, $1.00; Yearly subscriptions, $28; foreign, $31; students, $17.

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(ISBN 0028-6583). Item g. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide. The New Republic is available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

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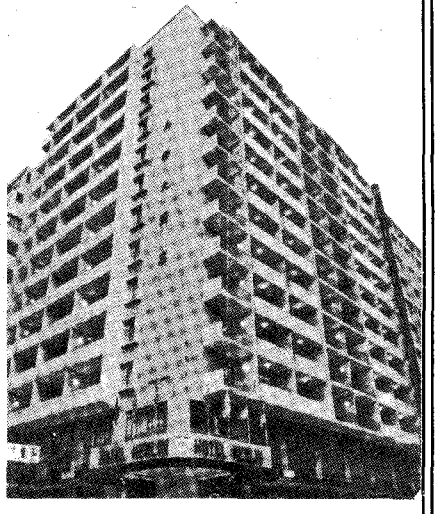

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

May 31, 1980

Allies Like These

Out of its bottomless cynicism, the Soviet Union has drawn a new peace proposal: a call by the Warsaw Pact on May 15 for a world summit conference to discuss "removing the hotbeds of international tension and preventing war." Meanwhile, of course, the Soviets and their allies persist in spreading tension, war, and even famine wherever it suits their interests—in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, and in Cambodia. Closer to home, Cuba, the Soviets' Caribbean satellite, continues to demonstrate its inability to provide for the welfare of its own citizens, but it persists in trying to export its system of servitude. The latest recipient, according to US intelligence reports, is Jamaica, where Cuba has secretly sent three large shipments of weapons and ammunition for the thugs of Prime Minister Michael Manley's People's National party to use against the opposition Labor party. Some 30 opposition supporters have been killed so far in anticipation of Jamaican elections scheduled to take place by October.

Fortunately the world sees the Warsaw Pact proposal for what it is—an East Bloc propaganda stunt. And yet the two other major power blocs in the world, the Western allies and the Islamic nations, are unable to muster the political cohesion to respond adequately to Soviet advances around the world. The Islamic foreign ministers felt it necessary to treat the "great powers" more or less equally, as if the US attempt to rescue its hostages in Iran were comparable to the 100,000-man Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The NATO foreign and defense ministers did charge the Soviet Union with jeopardizing world peace and took some steps toward beefing up military preparedness in Europe. But the West's show of unity quickly crumbled. The French rushed off to a summit with Brezhnev while all the allies except Canada, West Germany, and Norway proved unwilling even to join an Olympic boycott over Afghanistan. Sport is more important than solidarity, and so is economics. Despite Iran's utter disrespect for international law, the allies were unable to agree on more than token sanctions against the ayatollah, and even these broke down, thanks to British opposition.

If the Soviet Union thinks that its adversaries are in disarray and ripe for exploitation, it may well be right. The NATO defense ministers may pass resolutions pledging to build up military stores in Europe so that the United States can devote resources to the Persian Gulf, but it is not clear that the allies actually will go through with the plans. The allies are accustomed to expect the United States to bear the greatest economic burden for the defense of the alliance, and now they expect us to pay the biggest price for defending their oil sources, too. As a *Washington Post* analysis reminded us last week, Americans spent $520 per person last year on defense (5.1 percent of GNP), while France spent $349 (four percent), Germany $396 (4.1 percent), Canada $157 (1.8 percent), and Japan $87 per person—less than one percent of its GNP. So unaccustomed are the Japanese to pulling their own weight that their government fell, in part, because of Prime Minister Ohira's acquiescence to US pressure to increase defense spending.

The Carter administration, to be sure, shares richly in the blame for the irresolution of the Western alliance. The Carter record has been one of vacillation on nearly every major issue of foreign, economic, and energy policy. As Belgian foreign minister Henri Simonet delicately put it, "As an ally who wishes to be considered faithful, I must say that if the leadership is not always understood, it is because there has not always been much to understand." And yet the Europeans have not always tried very hard to understand, either. During the Vietnam War, they rightly criticized our aggression and also carped at our preoccupation with Asia. But then in the post-Vietnam era, they groused over alleged American isolationism and absence of commitment. And now that

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we show signs of reawakening to the necessity of resisting force, now that we are attempting—however fitfully—to resume a leadership role in the alliance, the allies are cavilling again. The allies should ponder this nightmare: Ronald Reagan is elected in November and appoints John Connally as his secretary of state; Connally institutes an American foreign policy that is as narrowly nationalist and self-interested as European and Japanese foreign policies have been.

Columnist William Safire proposed half in jest last week that some senator would do his country a service by being irresponsible enough to reintroduce the Mansfield Amendment to provide the president with a stick to beat the Europeans with. That amendment, never passed into law, called for the withdrawal of US military forces in Europe. No one has been irresponsible and isolationist enough to revive the amendment yet, but if the Europeans do not begin thinking of ways to bolster American policy, instead of perpetually undermining it, someone will, and not at all in jest.

Europeans and Americans who are tempted to think that any administration would be better than Carter's should consider what a Reagan administration likely would do about strategic arms control. Much of the Reagan entourage thinks that the effort to limit the nuclear arms race is sissified, unworthy of a great big world power. To be sure, that's not what the candidate himself says. He is merely against SALT I and SALT II. Theoretically, he says, he would favor an "equitable" arms treaty, but only after the United States had built up its weaponry to the point where such a treaty could be negotiated.

It is not clear what kind of an arsenal would make Reagan feel secure. Judging by what some of his advisers favor, the Reagan program may well include the MX missile, additional Trident submarines, and the B-1 bomber. All told, they say, the US needs to increase defense spending by some $40 billion per year for the next five years—some $160 billion more than the five percent a year increases the Carter administration has proposed over the same period. And if Reagan were true to his other campaign promises, he would be spending this kind of money while simultaneously cutting taxes by $30 billion over a three-year period. Americans ought to contemplate the inflationary effects of this kind of agenda, as well as the social dislocations caused by domestic spending cutbacks. So should the Europeans, the Japanese, and those Middle Eastern countries that depend on the economic and social strength of the United States, as well as its military might.

Besides the economic impact of probable Reagan policies, there are potentially serious strategic dangers. If SALT collapses, the Soviet Union surely will put as many nuclear warheads atop their large missiles as their technology will permit. SALT II limits them to 10 warheads, but the rockets are big enough to hold 20. The upshot of this is that 300 SS-18 missiles will carry some 6000 warheads—more than enough to overwhelm the presently contemplated MX missile system.

Some of Reagan's most stalwart supporters, also some of the toughest critics of SALT, oppose the MX system for other reasons, too. They don't want its roads and missile shelters built in their states, messing up the landscape, and they don't want thousands of outsiders coming into their states to work on the project. We don't blame them for not wanting the MX system, but the opposition of hawks like senators Paul Laxalt of Nevada and Jake Garn of Utah is ironic in the extreme.

The Reagan camp's solution to the missile problem is to dig thousands of holes in the ground, put missiles in some of them and leave others empty, and deploy dummy missiles to fool Soviet satellite cameras about which holes contain the missiles. The problem, according to administration officials, is that the Soviets sooner or later are going to develop techniques to tell exactly where our missiles are. We apparently have such a capability, and there's no reason to think they can't develop it too. The meaning of all this is that without SALT, the United States and the Soviet Union each are likely to have a first-strike capability against the other. At the very least, mutual first-strike capability would make future crises and misunderstandings between the US and the Soviet Union very nerve-racking affairs indeed.

Jimmy Carter isn't the only presidential candidate this year who favors SALT. So does John Anderson. If somehow the Democratic convention could find a way to nominate Edmund Muskie or Walter Mondale instead of Carter, there might be hope that the United States could give the world strong and stable leadership, conclude nuclear arms agreements, and also face down future Russian aggression. However the elections turn out, the free world is going to have to realize that we face a fearsome and powerful foe in the Soviet Union, one whose power matches or exceeds our own. If the West is going to prevail—possibly, if we are going to survive—we are going to have to find ways of doing it together, and under American leadership.

A Half-Baked Scheme

The Energy Mobilization Board approved by House-Senate conferees on April 30 is a bad idea, badly executed. When President Carter first proposed it, he said it would cut red tape and thus speed up energy projects he regards as important—particularly those involving the development of synthetic oil and gas. As we noted even before Carter proposed his $88 billion program last summer (see "Synfuel Madness," *TNR*, July 21 & 28, 1979), synfuels aren't likely to prove an economical answer to our energy problems—or else

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they wouldn't need such extravagant subsidies. They also raise the prospect of water shortages and widespread despoilation of the countryside in the western states where the projects are likely to be located.

The idea behind the "fast-track" board was that federal and state regulations have hamstrung the nation's efforts to free itself of OPEC's stranglehold. (The board's congressional supporters waved a long list of energy projects allegedly delayed by environmental laws; many of the projects, it turned out, were halted for other reasons.) In its final form, the board would be able to recommend a waiver of any federal law or regulation standing in the way of a project. The president then would have the option of asking Congress to approve a waiver, with the appropriate committees in the House and Senate having the power to kill it. The board also will be able to set deadlines for action on all permits required for a project, with the authority to step in and make the decision itself if the deadlines aren't met.

There are two problems with this approach. The waiver authority is really hardly any authority at all, since Congress already has the power to pass special legislation to waive a law when it sees fit. The danger is that it may automatically approve a waiver whenever the board requests one. Giving the board the power to set deadlines is not as harmless as one might think, since it will force hasty decisions on complex questions involving the trade-offs between energy production and environmental protection. Also, the Interior Department fears that some states simply will veto projects rather than let the federal government interfere with their decisions. Letting the board usurp the decision-making authority of federal, state, and local agencies will put crucial questions of public policy in the hands of an unelected troika heavily biased in favor of energy at any cost.

In any case, this is a harebrained way to correct whatever flaws there may be in our current environmental laws. If the laws are badly written or unreasonably burdensome, as their critics contend, then they should be altered accordingly. It makes no sense to apply ill-conceived laws to all except a few specially exempted projects.

Nor is there much logic in trying to remove bureaucratic obstacles by setting up yet another federal agency. Some industry experts say that getting designated as a "priority energy project" may actually take longer than simply going through existing procedures. The board is supposed to circumvent time-consuming court litigation through a provision that requires all suits to be heard by the Temporary Emergency Court of Appeals under strict deadlines. But that provision, like many of the board's powers, raises knotty legal and constitutional questions, which can only be resolved—surprise!—through litigation.

At this point it's not clear whether the Energy Mobilization Board will be merely useless or positively dangerous. What is obvious is that this is a bad way to attack whatever problems have been created by our environmental laws. It's not likely to be much help in solving our energy problems, either.

A Needless Obstacle

As Congress returns from its Memorial Day recess, it has a bit of bad work to undo. Conferees from the House and Senate will meet to reconcile different versions of Senate Joint Resolution 119, which would allow a private group to construct a memorial to Vietnam veterans on public land in Washington, DC. No public money is directly involved. The bill calls for two acres to be set aside in Constitution Gardens, an area just off the Mall near the Lincoln Memorial. On that land, with private contributions, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Inc. would build an understated, landscaped memorial, "in honor and recognition" of those who served in Vietnam.

In many ways, the hardest work for this project has already been done. The directors of the memorial fund, a group of young Vietnam veterans in the Washington area, have conveyed a vision of a monument to reconciliation, which would affirm the dignity and recognize the sacrifice of those who served in Vietnam instead of using them once again as tools in the old arguments for and against the war. The national sponsoring committee for the memorial includes Barry Goldwater and George McGovern, Vernon Jordan and Gerald Ford. When Senator Charles Mathias introduced the resolution, he had 99 co-sponsors—Helms and Proxmire, Laxalt and Church. It passed the Senate with no dissenting vote.

That accomplishment makes it all the more maddening that a bureaucratic obstacle now stands in the project's way. On May 20, as the House considered the resolution, Representative Philip Burton engineered an apparently harmless amendment that would leave the choice of the site to the secretary of the interior. The problem with this is time—and bona fides. The resolution gives the memorial group five years to draw up its plans, have them approved by the Interior Department and other agencies, raise the money, and break ground. To save time, and to have a specific site to refer to in its fundraising appeals, the group commissioned its own "site selection" study, which recommended Constitution Gardens. On April 20, 1980, the director of the National Park Service (whose boss is the secretary of the interior) said that he had reviewed the "thorough and excellent analysis," and that he officially concurred with the Constitution Gardens site. It was on that understanding that the Senate passed the bill. Starting the site selection all over would waste time and money without doing anybody any good.

Whatever the reasons for Representative Burton's

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amendment, it threatens to delay the project and undo an agreement already made. The conferees should return to the Senate's version. It would be too painful if the memorial to a bureaucratized war were more bureaucratic harassment.

White House Watch

Hero's Return

Two scarred survivors of the Nixon White House are doing the impossible. They are making the assorted criminal behavior known as Watergate seem now to have been worse than it was perceived to be at the time. G. Gordon Liddy, the stoic conspirator who spent longer than necessary in prison rather than talk in court, says in what he pompously calls his autobiography that he'd have arranged the murders of a supervising conspirator, E. Howard Hunt, and of columnist Jack Anderson if his White House overseers had not restrained him. Spiro T. Agnew, the disgraced vice president, says in a book titled *Go Quietly. . . Or Else* (Morrow) that he gave up and quit in October 1973, because he thought Nixon and the chief of the White House staff, General Alexander Haig, were threatening to have him assassinated if he didn't resign.

Here we leave Liddy to his murderous fantasies, noting that he's talking when he's safe from further prosecution because of the statute of limitations. We concentrate on Spiro Agnew for a reason. If things had gone differently for Agnew in 1973, he might have succeeded Richard Nixon in 1974, he might have stood for election in 1976, and he might be President of the United States today. All of this seemed possible in 1973 to Agnew, to better and wiser people around Nixon, and to millions of Americans who chanted "Spiro our Hero" and believed him to be a truer conservative than Nixon. "It is possible," Agnew writes in his book, "that I lost not only the vice presidency, but the presidency" when he was driven out before Nixon resigned. On "Meet the Press," during one of his TV appearances promoting his book and his campaign for exoneration, he was asked whether he thought he'd have defeated Jimmy Carter if he'd been the Republican nominee in 1976. "Who can say?" he answered, visibly pleased by the thought. "I have no idea." He wrote that Bryce Harlow, the only senior Nixon assistant whom he trusted and who, to Agnew's anguish, joined Haig and others in urging him to resign, was on a "secret committee" formed in early 1973 to prepare for his candidacy in 1976. He confessed under TV questioning that "there wasn't any committee set up. There was an informal conversation at my home one night . . . but there were no plans being made. [But] I thought I was a major possibility."

Agnew in his book referred in passing to "Haig's threat" and "the threat" of assassination as if it actually had been made. In his fuller references to it, however, he suggested without asserting as known fact that it had been made. In the book and in recent TV appearances, he had the grace—a quality in short supply with him—to recognize that "perhaps I overreacted, but my mental state after months of constant pressure was hardly conducive to calm and dispassionate evaluation." Evaluation, he meant, of statements by Haig on Nixon's behalf that in October 1973 caused him to "fear for my life" and believe that "I was told, 'Go quietly—or else.' " He told a TV questioner: "I've never said there was a probability that my life was in danger. I've said that it was one of the factors that crossed my mind" before he agreed with Attorney General Elliot Richardson to plead *nolo contendere* (no contention) to a charge of income tax evasion and resign in return for a guarantee that he would not be prosecuted and jailed on numerous charges of taking bribes from Maryland public-works contractors while he was a county executive and governor. He was harsher and more explicit in the book: "There was one thing and only one thing that brought me back to the bargaining table with the prosecutors: Mr. Nixon's threat, relayed by Haig, that things would 'get nasty—and dirty' unless I resigned at once."

The "get nasty" line is from the document on which Agnew chiefly relies for his assertion that Haig's language could be interpreted as a threat of assassination. The document is a memorandum to Vice President Agnew from his military aide, Major General Mike Dunn, reporting a session between Dunn and Haig on October 4, 1973. Testimony obtained by federal investigators of political corruption in Maryland during and before Agnew's time in local and state office had convinced Attorney General Richardson, Haig, two White House lawyers, and finally Nixon (according to Nixon in his memoirs) that Agnew when county executive and governor had taken bribes from contractors and had continued to accept payments for past services after he became vice president. Agnew said then and is saying now that it was and is all lies, uncorroborated by any witness who knew of somebody else paying off Agnew. His story is that Nixon, Richardson, Haig, and others wanted him out because his troubles were compounding Nixon's Watergate troubles. Certainly Nixon and the others wanted Agnew out for that reason. Certainly he was the victim of an unconscionable campaign of leaks by federal prosecutors in Maryland and at the Justice Department. This writer was among many commentators who denounced the leaks and said that they in effect condemned Agnew without a hearing or even formal charges.

By October 4, when Haig summoned Dunn for a

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showdown in Haig's White House office, Agnew had dared the prosecutors to prosecute, had invited a congressional investigation, and had alternately refused to bargain on any terms and let his lawyers intimate that he might bargain if he were promised freedom from indictment, trial, and jail. According to Dunn's memo to Agnew, Haig told Dunn to tell Agnew what Haig in person had previously told the vice president without result—it was time to quit horsing around and resign. Nixon, Haig said, had abandoned his limited public support of Agnew and wanted him out. Partly in a paraphrase and partly in direct quotation, the Dunn memo had Haig saying: "In any event, after indictment, we are off to the races and cannot control the situation any longer—anything may be in the offing. It can and will get nasty and dirty. Don't think that the game cannot be played from here," meaning the White House. Agnew in the book supplemented the memo: "General Dunn told me that General Haig also reminded him about the great power of the presidency, saying, 'The President has a lot of power—don't forget that.' " Agnew continued: "His remark sent a chill through my body. I interpreted it as an innuendo that anything could happen to me; I might have a convenient 'accident.' What had Haig meant when he said, 'Anything may be in the offing?' "

What to believe? The last thing Nixon needed then was a mysteriously dead vice president, a situation that indeed could have been arranged by CIA or other presidential hit men if Nixon had so desired. Or if Haig had so desired, for that matter. But it is inconceivable that they desired Agnew's assassination. I go along with what ABC's Barbara Walters said Haig told her just before she interviewed Agnew: "Instead of writing a book, Spiro Agnew should spend his time thanking God he isn't in jail."

Whether Agnew was guilty or innocent of taking bribes, whether he was or wasn't threatened by Nixon and Haig, is of minor or no concern to most people now. What remains pertinent is what this man tells us about his character in the course of his plea for exoneration. It is the character of an ethnic (Greek) American who made his way up from near poverty, won public office including the governorship of his state, and was elected vice president of the United States. This man's rise before he fell says something about our society and what he tells about himself and his character is meaningful.

Agnew on public officials accepting private gifts: ". . . Mrs. Agnew and I were not rich. We owned only a mortgaged house, a few securities, and some personal property. We lived very quietly and conservatively within our income. We paid nearly every bill by check. One of my closest friends, Harry Dundore, had given me money on quite a few occasions since I had become governor and then Vice President—usually a thousand dollars at a time. He is a retired businessman, very well to do, and he gave it to me out of friendship as a present because, as I have said, it was not easy for a Vice President to live as a Vice President is expected to live on my salary. He had no business with public works or the government."

Agnew estimated that friends over the years had given him about $12,000 more than the $17,000 he said the Internal Revenue Service found in unreported income. He said he paid $155,000 to the IRS in settlement of a claim for unpaid taxes, penalties, and interest on unreported income which, if the claim was valid, must have exceeded $17,000. He got the $155,000 from $200,000 that his friend Frank Sinatra, the singer, loaned him on faith. Sinatra had previously loaned him $30,000 after he resigned. "He reached down and saved me," Agnew said of Sinatra on TV. He also said he completed repaying the $230,000 to Sinatra in 1978.

Agnew on political realities: "It would be dishonest of me to say that I was completely naive about the political realities of fund-raising. Like most politicians I knew we had to have the campaign money, and I knew that it came mainly from people who made money out of being politically 'in.' It was a wise policy for a candidate or officeholder to isolate himself as much as possible from the political collection process, but it wasn't always possible, particularly at the county level. The contributor always wanted to give the money to you personally so he was sure that you knew he was helping you. And he usually gave it in cash, for three reasons. First, he was giving to both parties, playing both sides of the street and hedging his bets, so he wanted no records made. Second, he probably had not paid taxes on the cash; and third, he knew that in every campaign there was a great need for 'walking around money', the legal tender for paid election-day workers, and for other cash needs that did not look quite right on a detailed election expenditure report. . . . I asked for no details because I wanted to be insulated from a process which always has gray overtones as to legality. Certainly, this attitude was wrong but it was, and still is, a way of life in politics."

It may again be Agnew's way of life. Barbara Walters asked him whether in his "wildest dreams" he imagines himself going back into politics. "I don't dream of it," Agnew answered. "I consider it's a possibility. . . . Can you think of a better way to rehabilitate your image

Coming Next Week:
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than to be elected to something?"

Walters said he spoke, off the air, of running for Congress. He'd presumably run in California, where he lives. He remarked in the Walters interview that "California may need a new governor" and that he's been talking with Ronald Reagan. He told her and other interviewers that he may run because "I still have something to prove." The something, he says, is that he's innocent and people who believe he is should be given a chance to say so with their votes.

John Osborne

All there was in the smoke-filled rooms was smoke.

The Myth of the Kingmakers

by Nicholas von Hoffman

"If conventions were entirely predictable, why hold them?" asked New York's governor Hugh Carey the other day as part of his continuing effort to "open" the Democratic meeting this summer. He's not alone. Many other people, depressed at the thought of the battle of titans twixt Carter and Reagan, are asking why not go back to the days of the "brokered convention"? "They have a show at Madison Square Garden where you jump through hoops," said Carey, "but that's run by Barnum and Bailey, not by the Democratic party." All of this is in line with the nostalgia among political sophisticates for the return of the strong political organization, for the reenthronement of boss rule, i.e., the leadership of the prudent, the intrepid, the wisely tough, or the toughly wise.

So what was it really like back then when bosses bossed and politicians didn't have aides but underlings and hirelings and a far-sighted hierarchy (of a basically democratic nature to be sure) prevailed?

The most famous of all brokered conventions, the convention that gave America the term "smoke-filled room," was the 1920 Republican National Convention in Chicago, which also gave the world Warren Gamiel Harding, who only recently surrendered his title of worst president, all categories, to the man with the hunched back and the swooped nose.

Part of the basis for the unbreakable belief that Harding was the product of a ring of Old Guard senatorial bosses was a quotation given to the *New York Times* in February of 1920, months before the convention, by Harry Daugherty, WGH's campaign manager: "About eleven minutes after two on Friday morning at the convention, when fifteen or twenty men, somewhat weary, are sitting around a table, someone of them will say, 'Who will we nominate?' At that decisive time, the friends of Harding can suggest him and can afford to abide by the result."

That quotation has been used again and again to explain how Harding, retrospectively viewed as an absolute nonentity, a horse so dark as to be invisible, could gain the nomination. So the story goes, there was a meeting on the night of Friday, June 11, in the 13th floor Hotel Blackstone suite of Will Hays, the Republican national chairman, and a number of Old Guard chieftains. According to legend and the testimony of one person there, George Harvey, an inveterate fixer cum braggart, the Big Boys summoned Harding into their presence and asked him if he knew of any reason he should not be president of the United States. The Ohio senator was allowed to step into an adjoining chamber, where he communed with God and his conscience. He returned to stand humbly before this circle of power and answer he had nothing to hide, whereupon he was anointed.

In one version or another, this account of Harding's nomination has been accepted by unscholarly popularizers and scholarly historians for 60 years. The catch is that it isn't true.

Oh, there were discussions in Will Hays's hotel suite that night, as there were all over town with a deadlocked convention that would have to resume balloting the next morning. With one exception, all the men who were alleged to have been in the suite were indeed there, but never all at the same time. People trotted in and trailed out as they do at all confused and excited conventions. Senator James Wadsworth of New York, a participant, later said his colleagues "were like a lot of chickens with their heads cut off." And as for Harding, no one but Harvey can remember him being on the 13th floor of the Blackstone Friday night.

Saturday morning the convention took its fifth inconclusive ballot with Frank O. Lowden and General Leonard Wood in a virtual 303 to 299 tie. Of the 16

Nicholas von Hoffman is a syndicated columnist. His latest book is *Make-Believe Presidents* (Pantheon).

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senators involved in the meeting of the night before, 13 of them voted against Harding until the ninth ballot, when it was obvious the Harding avalanche had begun. The only thing there'd been in the original, smoke-filled room was smoke; or, as Harding, the poker player who had counted on winning as a compromise candidate, put it, "We drew to a pair of deuces and filled."

Next to Harding, the American president most often thought of as the tool of machine politicians was William McKinley. Cartoonists depicted the president as the Trilbey of his campaign manager, Marcus Alonzo Hanna, the Cleveland industrialist who fathered modern, big-money electioneering as we now know it. As the Hearst press said of McKinley at the time of his nomination drive, "Hanna will shuffle him and deal him like a pack of cards." In fact Hanna's relationship wasn't that of a backroom boss but, according to one shrewd contemporary Chicago newspaperman, "always that of a big, bashful boy toward the girl he loves."

Actually McKinley campaigned for the nomination under the slogan "The Bosses Against the People" after the party's *gontser machers* informed Hanna the price of their support would be complete control of the patronage in their states. Hanna hastened home to Ohio with terms of the proposed deal, telling McKinley, "Now, Major [he always called him by his Civil War title], it's all over but the shouting. [Senator Matt] Quay wants the patronage of Pennsylvania, [Senator Nelson, of Rhode Island] Aldrich, of New England . . . [Tom, The Easy Boss] Platt wants New York, but he wants it in writing; you remember he was fooled on [President Benjamin] Harrison. . . . I think they're willing to leave this region to me."

To which McKinley replied, "Mark, some things come too high. . . . If those are the terms, I am out of it." The ever subservient Hanna then said to his object of veneration, "Oh, no, not so fast. I meant that on those terms the nomination would be settled immediately, but that does not mean that their terms have got to be accepted." So the struggle was begun that would see McKinley chosen on the first ballot at the 1896 St. Louis convention against the pleasures of the bosses and the brokers.

Teddy Roosevelt's nomination that year as vice president was, however, owing in part to the backing of the Eastern power brokers. Tom Platt, The Easy Boss, wanted to get TR the hell out of New York where, as governor, he was bidding fair to ruin the regular Republican organization. Matt Quay, the Pennsylvania boss who spent his idle hours reading classical Greek and Latin texts, apparently supported Teddy because the thought of the Rough Rider in the vice presidency gave Hanna raging fits. Roosevelt swept the convention and "took the veil," as The Easy Boss referred to the kick upstairs to veepdom.

Even at the apogee of the Gilded Age, boss rule seldom prevailed at a national level. In 1880, the Stalwarts, as the GOP bosses of that period were called, got the perfectly putrid idea of bringing Ulysses S. Grant, out of the White House since 1876, back for a third term. Led by one of the most imperious bosses in American history, Senator "Lord" Roscoe Conkling of New York, they failed because they couldn't impose the unit rule on delegations with anti-Grant votes hidden in them. Even on the 36th ballot Lord Roscoe was on the floor telling his forces, "Keep steady, boys; Grant is going to win on this ballot." In fact, it was James A. Garfield who did, although that shouldn't be taken as victory for good government, since the nominee's reputation was splotched for taking railroad stock in return for supporting the company when he was a member of the House of Representatives.

The picture of stogie-smoking political brutes forcing convention after convention to accept candidates that manumitted delegates never would have voted for is spurious. National political conventions have accepted dictation only from presidents of their own party. William Howard Taft, beaten in 11 out of 12 primaries in 1912, couldn't be denied renomination. In 1932 Herbert Hoover lost seven out of eight primaries. He was beaten repeatedly by former Maryland senator Joseph I. France, who was physically flung out of the convention hall when he tried to reach the podium to nominate Calvin Coolidge. In 1968 President Lyndon Johnson had the power to force the Democrats to take Hubert Humphrey, although he'd lost every primary where his name had been entered and had gained less than three percent of the total vote that year.

One gauge of how bossed and brokered conventions were in the past might be the number of ballots it took to nominate. A convention that must cast ballot after ballot in the enervating heat of those pre-airconditioned days was no cut and dried affair, and such was often the case, even with the Republicans, in the long years between the Civil War and the modern era. First-ballot nominations, when they did occur, were seldom owing to machines or steamrollers.

Only courtesy would impel one to call the Democrats from Lincoln to Franklin Roosevelt a political party. They won only four national elections in that time and two of them, Wilson's victories, were the result of civil war among the Republicans. The Bryan/Populist insurgency of the 1890s excepted, the Democrats had no platform, no program, and, as a loose confederation of southern Bourbon reactionaries and northern immigrant, big city political organizations, they lacked the cohesion and purpose to be a truly national political party.

Such an agglomeration of wheeler-dealers was inherently unbossable at the national convention level, but if that weren't enough, the famous two-thirds rule made for unbossed, multi-balloted conventions, particularly when there was a chance to win. The rule, repealed in 1936, stipulated that the nominee needed a two-thirds majority, thus explaining the 45 ballots necessary to nominate Wilson. FDR was chosen on the fourth ballot, apparently after a deal was struck for him

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to take Texas's evil, whiskey-drinking, tobacco-chewing Cactus Jack Garner as his running mate.

The convention system throughout that era was exciting, disorderly, higgledy-piggledy, but never did what it was accused of—stuffing an unwanted candidate down a gagging convention's mouth. There were some near misses, however, as when the Republicans nominated Wendell Willkie, a colorful Wall Street lawyer with a crowd-pleasing talent and one slightly debilitating drawback: he was a lifelong Democrat, a fact that prompted Senator Jim Watson to inform the audacious claimant, "Well, Wendell, you know that back home in Indiana it's all right if the town whore joins the church, but they don't let her lead the choir the very first night."

The Willkie nomination wasn't bulldozed through by the bosses, if the Republicans had any left to speak of in 1940, but by the media monguls. His candidacy had been cooked up by the managing editor of *Fortune* magazine and would subsequently be backed by the Cowles publications (newspapers in Des Moines and Minneapolis plus *Look* magazine), *Reader's Digest*, the *New York Herald-Tribune*, and other internationalist elements in the Republican party. You can't say whether Willkie became the party's true choice or whether the media barrage, the stacked and packed chanting galleries, plus the pots of gold backing the effort secured the nomination for him. It did give new life to a never completely dormant suspicion among certain strains in both parties that Wall Street, the Money Trust, the Ivy League, and Eastern pantywaists had stolen the nomination.

Actually, what was happening was the accelerating decline of the convention system. That began with the introduction, here and there, of the direct primary, for the primary makes a political party public property. Previously you had to work, give money, at least go to a local caucus meeting to get into party decision-making. With the primary, anybody can walk in the door and take part, which, of course, meant newspapers and other mass media would henceforth have a much greater influence on candidate selection.

This was all more or less foreseen as long ago as 1908, when a small group of Republican state assemblymen entered a loud demurral to Illinois's new primary law in the House journal: "WE PROTEST, Against the passage of a law that . . . will absolutely destroy this great party . . . and in the end destroy all parties, placing the power of government in the hands of the independent and minority voters. . . . It makes the individual—the personality of some candidate—the party platform in place of principles."

What is puzzling is how slow the changeover from a semi-private caucus/convention system has been, considering that Americans love direct elections and fret over any system, like the electoral college, whereby people are chosen to choose other people. Nevertheless, since World War II, something like a de facto national primary system has evolved rather rapidly, as conventions become the foregone conclusions Governor Carey complains about.

It has been 32 years since a Republican convention has needed a second ballot to chose its candidate; 28 years since the Democrats did. The last time either party dared to pick someone over the clear winner of the primary circuit was 1952. That year Tennessee's senator Estes Kefauver polled more than three million votes, 64 percent of all votes cast, in the primaries, and was rejected by a convention for a snobbish, closet anti-Semite, Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois. But President Truman wanted him. So did the fading, last generation of city bosses and the anti-civil rights southerners who could smell a safe man even across the Mason-Dixon line.

Stevenson's ascent reflected the rank-and-file wishes of a party not yet decisively controlled by the primary. Eight years later it was by winning primaries that John Kennedy secured the nomination, knocking out Humphrey. No longer were primaries "eyewash," as President Truman called them, but they were not yet the conclusive test. In 1968 the rebellious, antiwar candidacies of Minnesota's Gene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy rolled up almost 70 percent of the total primary vote between them. Had Kennedy not been murdered, Johnson probably would not have been able to get Humphrey, though one of the most popular men in his party, crowned King for a Day. Humphrey had not contested the primaries, something you could get away with even 12 years ago. By the end of the 1970s, nomination of a person who hadn't fought through the primary circuit still was technically possible, but was politically unthinkable, like the electoral college picking someone other than Carter or Ford in 1976 for president.

Since no one intended to scrap the national convention, once the most exciting phenomena in American politics, the evolution toward the supremacy of the primary system has been uneven and un-uniform. In 1972, George McGovern actually finished half a percent behind Humphrey in the cumulative primary vote totals. By convention time McGovern had enough votes by other means to take the prize, but in a way that made many people feel, incorrectly, that he'd unfairly gained the upper hand. He seemed to be having a private, family-members-only picnic, much like Goldwater in 1964.

With the continuing decline of the national convention, many familiar political phenomena are disappearing. Under a national primary system there is no place for dark horses to stalk (you gotta get out there and win, buddy); nor does the favorite-son candidacy, with its hidden purpose of holding back blocks of votes till the strategic moment, make much sense in an era of first-ballot nominations. Even the party platform has been downgraded. In the old days they wrote the platform and then picked a more or less compatible nominee; now they pick the nominee first, and he more

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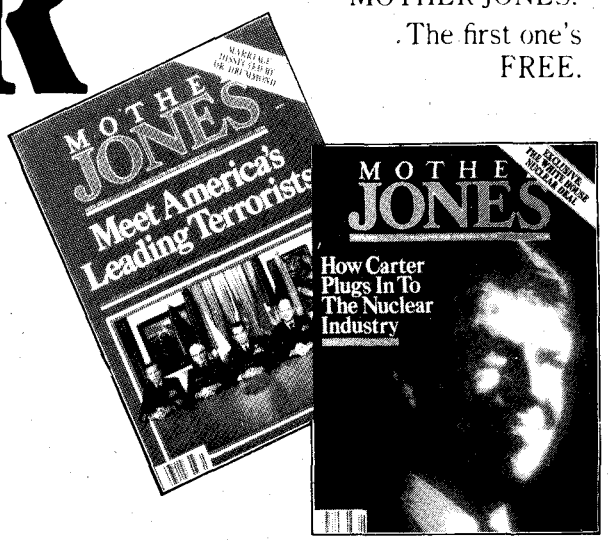

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or less writes the platform.

This year will provide a fine test as to exactly how archaic the conventions have become. If Ronald Reagan is palsied into incapacity, will the Republicans feel obliged to pick the preppy, peppy George Bush on the basis that he was the runner-up? Will pro-Kennedy or merely anti-Carter Democrats dare to abrogate the outcome of 37 primaries in which perhaps 20 million people will have voted—and speak not of the money spent? If they do set aside so many elections, will they get whipped for it by a public backlash?

The last question: which system, the convention or the primaries, has served us better? In theory, it ought to be the caucus/convention method. It should be more immune from mass-media influence and therefore—since only activists get to make the decisions—ought to create a little ideological space between the two parties. That's the theory; historically, the larger forces at work in the nation have made significant differences between the parties rare over the past 120 years.

Which approach selects the bold leader, the outstanding man we insist we want in the White House? Neither does very often. Counting George Washington, we've probably only had seven presidents who merit the adjective great, but if great men came frequently they wouldn't be great. You need midgets to appreciate height. If Reagan versus Carter gets you down, you're lucky you didn't have to choose between Garfield and Hancock or Dewey and Truman, or attend a lot of other presidential turkey shoots.

Both ways do produce an adequate number of serviceable men who crudely mirror ourselves and our preferences. If Jimmy Carter is confused these days, who isn't? If our presidential candidates lack leadership, maybe we can make it up by improving our followership. A great leader with poor followers should be approximately the same as a poor leader with great followers. And for consolation, be assured the networks will find some way to make the conventions, petrified though they may have become, as suspenseful and entertaining as they were back in the days when they had some business to transact.

The groundlings in their stalls have asked for their money back.

Camelot Lost

by Henry Fairlie

In spite of anything or all that Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. may say as lickspittle to the family, the political difficulties of Edward Kennedy this year, which only a few anticipated as late as last fall, have not been caused by the advantages given to Jimmy Carter by the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Russian adventure in Afghanistan. Nor can President Carter himself take the credit for Kennedy's discomfiture. The difficulties of Edward Kennedy have sprung from him and from the nature of his own candidacy. No local circumstances or passing events can explain the general severity of the popular judgment of him in the great majority of states. In no region where he has been tested so far, in no social class or ethnic or religious group, has the story been much different. His unpopularity in the country—his unacceptability as a candidate for the presidency—is widespread and deep. This is not a Kennedy candidacy which fits the legend.

This in fact says something for the man, perhaps more than his supporters say. He began his campaign last fall as a bearer of the legend. All the old mottos were inscribed on his pennants. But even he realized quite early that the legend was an obstacle. It invited people to make unfavorable comparisons with what they remembered. It made him look like a candidate who expected the presidency as rightfully his. But the memories that are still treasured by so many people are no longer transferred to any and every member of the Kennedy family. That is why we have been witnessing, not only the unhorsing of a candidate, but the exorcism of a legend. Where Kennedy has shown the ability to survive the withering of the legend, the stronger he has stood forward as a candidate. Even those who still question his fitness for the presidency can agree that he has fought back in adverse circumstances with evidence of his own political character. Unfortunately there has not been any equal evidence of his political intelligence. One can honor him for his courage without praising him for his sense.

Although he has fitfully sought to detach himself from the legend, the fact remains that he still reaches for it as a prop. In one of his newer television advertisements, meant to revive his campaign, there is a replay of the Apollo rocket as it takes off and journeys

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to the moon. "This country landed a man on the moon," says a voice, "yet we're told we can't meet the challenges we face today." The image is hackneyed, the sentiment is hackneyed. The exhortation that follows is therefore also hackneyed. "Ted Kennedy says we can. He knows the American spirit." But there has been nothing in his career or his campaign that suggests he knows the American spirit any better than, say, Mrs. Nell Fiola, who is running for the presidency as a "modern-day prophetess" and promises that her administration will be in touch with the planets. He knows the American spirit, the advertisement says, as inheritor of his brother's powers. But if John Kennedy and Apollo took off, Ted Kennedy never left the ground.

If the opponents of Edward Kennedy seem sometimes to direct their criticism less against him than against the notion of a dynasty, then it is because this notion has been cultivated most sedulously not by them but by the sowers and propagators of the legend. It was nourished by them not only after the assassination of John Kennedy, when the "court in exile" was established in Washington, but from the beginning of his presidency. The questionable appointment of Robert Kennedy as attorney general, the aggressive manner in which the Justice Department was then used as a political arm of the White House, the anointment of Edward Kennedy as a senator as soon as he had passed the qualifying age, and of course the general atmosphere of a court that exuded from the White House: all encouraged the notion of a family with a hereditary right to the office, to be passed from brother to brother, then on to their sons. No one in 1965 thought that Robert Kennedy had established a residence in New York to become its senator and dedicate himself to the service of the state. He was there to challenge all pretenders to the throne.

The willingness of the American people for so many years to entertain and be entertained by the idea of a dynasty is often attributed to what is said to be their yearning for a royal family. In 15 years among the American people I have found no evidence of such yearning, although they do like a monarchy to be quaintly sustained in the country of George III. Americans have been obsessed with the Kennedys not as royalty but as celebrities. But the idea of a dynasty (as distinct from royalty), as nourished by the supporters of each of the Kennedys, has fascinated them. The idea is most peculiar and makes the largest claims on our credulity.

Hereditary monarchies have been stable and enduring in Europe only where it has been understood that the qualities transmitted to successive members of a royal family, as within any family, are just as likely to be gross stupidity, idleness, incompetence, or even depravity and perversion as their opposites. The workings of heredity usually have limited rather than enhanced the pretensions of monarchy simply by bestowing the succession by right on transparent fools

drawing by Roger Jones

or men of evil natures. But when the idea of a dynasty is transposed to the soil of a republic, since there is no assumed hereditary right to the succession, it must be shown that each member of the family is preternaturally gifted to rule. This claim is preposterously naive. The odds are simply against it, as history and even our knowledge of our own families will show, despite what Dr. Shockley says.

Such a notion can warp a people's attitude to the whole of their politics. The American presidency tends to encourage the belief that a shortcut may always be found—not merely a shortcut but even a miracle—if simply on the off-chance that a savior may emerge from somewhere in the political system or even from outside it. The Kennedy legend has nurtured the insupportable and misleading idea that there is some identifiable and rare kind of intelligence that fits a man for political leadership, and this in turn has been used to foster the notion that there is some limited but available resource of intellectual talent which can be tapped by this rare political leader to ensure the good government of the country, and which in unfortunate periods of interregnum can be kept on ice on the banks of the Charles River, much as Dr. Shockley wishes to keep the sperm of Nobel prize-winners for the one Apollo-sent

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moment when intelligence may form its perfect union with intelligence.

At least until the past few months, the press has fawned over the intelligence attributed to the retainers whom each Kennedy in turn has attracted. This was true not only of the most celebrated in the administration of John Kennedy, but of those at the second level who have since been granted asylum in various institutions on the East Coast, and who seem on their own to be very lightweight men with popinjay minds. It was no less true of the exorbitant praise which until recently was ladled over the staffs of Edward Kennedy. His Senate staffs were good at producing reports. Wherever he was chairman of a committee or subcommittee, forests had to die to produce new volumes of reports; this was the only activity in which he really indulged as a senator. But we have heard less of the excellence of his staffs as his campaign has crumbled, and now we hear that the new retainers are blaming the old courtiers for the severity of his defeat. The truth is, a glib articulateness has marked the intelligences of both.

But this notion of an exquisite and elite intelligence which only a wealthy politician can buy or a glamorous one attract—possessing, one might say, that facility which marks the superior law schools and Rhodes scholars and all institutes of advanced studies—is only a particular way of fostering the belief that there are shortcuts to be taken round the political process. It cannot be said too often that achievement in other fields is no indication of political acumen. Politicians are *sui generis* because politics is *sui generis*, a unique activity with its own rules of thumb by which necessary skills are measured. Americans have a poor enough regard for their politics and politicians anyhow, and the idea of the Kennedys as the repository of dynastic intelligence has nourished it.

The notion that there is such an intelligence that offers a shortcut in politics, that there are those who are especially fitted to rule by commanding this intelligence, is one reason why the Kennedys since 1960 have always agitated politics in America. People are excited to believe that they can be led so simply out of difficulty and danger. It was one of my themes in *The Kennedy Promise* that the method of the Kennedys is bound to agitate the political scene more than is desirable or necessary, whether by the splendid appearances of John Kennedy before the people, clad in gold and silver and suspended between earth and heaven like a Byzantine emperor, or by the spectacle of Robert Kennedy borne through the streets of the ghettos, like a Gracchus carried by his supporters to his ordained assassination and eventually to the funeral pyre on the slopes of Arlington. John Kennedy as president aroused unreasonable expectations of what politics should and can do, while at the same time trying to bypass the ordinary political processes by which politics can achieve its legitimate but limited objectives. But the presidential campaign of Edward Kennedy has been such a lackluster affair and has met with such dusty defeats that Americans this year have refused to be agitated.

The idea of a Kennedy dynasty has been sustained until now by one of the deceptions nourished by the two assassinations. This is the myth of The Unfulfilled Presidency. Twice, by the unfairness of fortune, Kennedys were denied the opportunity to usher in the reign of perfect peace and prosperity; and now there is an attempt to suggest that the opportunity has been unfairly snatched a third time from the youngest brother by the intervention of events abroad. But this time the mythology is not taking hold. It is too obvious that Edward Kennedy has been defeated by the popular judgment of him. Carter has in fact demonstrated a fairly reliable knack of turning what ought to have been his advantage abroad to his own disadvantage, and any candidate of Kennedy's prominence and gifts should have reaped a harvest of votes. But even when his campaign has been given the impetus of a victory, there still has been no sign the following week that it is lifting off. There has been no sweep through any state at a crucial moment to match John Kennedy's sweep of West Virginia. Pennsylvania did not rally convincingly to him after New York. There can be no excusing of Edward Kennedy from responsibility for his own defeat, although Schlesinger already displays the signs of bending himself to the task. The man himself has lost, and with him the myth has died.

The dynastic notion has had to make yet another claim on our credulity. A voter in Boston, who had supported the two elder Kennedys, said in March: "I do not expect my three sons all to be good at the same thing, so why should these three sons all be fit to be president?" Why, indeed? It has taken the most obliging and ingenious of the myth-makers to come forward with an explanation. Each of the three brothers apparently has been transformed by a tragic and traumatic event in his life. For John Kennedy it was the death of his brother Joe Kennedy. For Robert Kennedy it was the death of his brother John Kennedy. For Edward Kennedy it was the death of Mary Jo Kopechne. The theory is gross. But it has been necessary to go to such absurd lengths in 1980 to uphold the idea that a man with as run-of-the-mill talents and virtues as Edward Kennedy is the vessel of one family's aptitude for governing. At least the idea of hereditary fitness has been abandoned for that of a pentecostal visitation to each of the brothers. Each may have been born a lightweight, but each has been transfigured by the angel of death.

Yet as the myth of the dynasty dies, the legend of John Kennedy persists as strongly as ever. His gifts of political command were his own, simply at his fingertips, transmitted to him from no one else. Joe Kennedy had left no model of the politician for him to emulate. He was largely empty of conviction, but he was confident of his calling and ability to govern the

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richest and most powerful nation on earth, and to govern it with brilliance. So he would reign in posterity, as indeed he does, by his manner of ruling in life.

He represented the World War II generation of Americans who had stridden the world with confidence and indeed with majesty. There was power to exercise, largesse to distribute, and the spirit of command to display. America would act again under his leadership with all the chivalry to which her destiny had summoned her, and the sun would glisten once more on the helmets of her warriors in their lusty prime. "And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold; / And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea." Whenever he was forced to give his attention to such problems as poverty or racial venom, he was moved not primarily by their own evil, but by the fact that they were stains on the bright escutcheon of America in the eyes of the world. When he sent federal troops to the South, he was in effect sending them also to Berlin. He was at first not much interested in the exploration of space, for example, and gave that responsibility to his vice president almost as a piece of hack work. But once he found it convenient to be interested, the thing would be done with luster, the achievement again to emblazon his name down the ages, the leader of a nation that was *non pareil*.

He was in fact a politician perfectly adapted to his times, and such a man to some extent makes the times his own. He is not just a passive instrument of the moment. I admit more readily than at the beginning of the 1970s that I would welcome the display of some of his qualities today, although I deny that those qualities have been found in either of his brothers. I was writing *The Kennedy Promise* at the end of a decade of turmoil; I am reflecting now at the close of a decade of lassitude. John Kennedy may have aroused too high an expectation of what politics can accomplish, but we have since endured the presidencies of men who have deliberately lowered all expectations. If one of the ways of exciting a great nation to efforts that match its power and responsibilities is by demanding that it present a fair face to the world, then one must say that the desire to lead a nation that was worthy of its destiny made him attempt worthy things. He wanted America to be and to appear chivalrous, and there is something to be said for a leader who so keeps the vigils of knighthood.

This question of a country's expectations is at the heart of the matter. On St. Valentine's Day in 1973, shortly after *The Kennedy Promise* was published, the newspapers printed the unwelcome information that Richard Nixon, at the end of a visit by Ronald Reagan, had presented his guest with a copy of my book. I was told later by members of the White House staff that the innocent volume indeed had been made compulsory reading. Now one may turn to Nixon's memoirs to find my name dragged in to justify his policies, and indeed to his second inaugural address to find lamentable pleas to the country to lower its expectations. That is what happened in the course of his own presidency. It has happened again in the presidency of Jimmy Carter; it is evident in the lethargic mood of the country; and may be found in the shallow conservatism that now is fashionable.

It is the deliberate nurture of what I have described as a passive negativism. What the conservatives overlooked in my book was one of the concluding paragraphs in which I said that politics is not only the art of the possible (which is too often said and used as an excuse for doing nothing), and neither is it the art of the impossible (which John Kennedy sometimes made it seem by his exhortations), but it is the art of the necessary. To see what it is necessary to do, beyond what seems merely possible, and then to set out to do it, is not as mundane a definition of politics as it may at first appear. The example that most obviously springs to mind is Franklin D. Roosevelt. There was little in his first campaign to arouse any high expectations. If he had come to office attempting only what seemed possible, he would have accomplished very little, and he was not a man to waste time pursuing the impossible. His genius was to see what it was necessary to do, and then by an act of political imagination to inspire the nation to go about doing it. He both put the nation back to work and then prepared it for a necessary war. The lowered expectations on which both Nixon and Carter have played have neither put the nation fruitfully to work nor prepared it to meet its responsibilities and the dangers abroad.

John Kennedy could grasp very quickly what it suddenly became necessary to do. Necessity and not a sense of justice made him realize that he must face down the racists in the South. But then he was the possessor of unusual gifts. It was when it had to be pretended that these had been transmitted to his brothers in very different times that the legend became poisonous. It therefore has been reassuring in 1980 to notice everywhere that the Americans at last have separated John Kennedy from his brothers. He now lives in their memories, even in the forming folk memories of children too young to have known him, as exalted and as gallant as ever. There is nothing wrong in a people now and then discovering such a figure, and then embodying their own hopes in his memory.

What is most interesting is that Robert Kennedy has more or less dropped from the popular memory. I will say little of him here except to express my belief that he was a man of limited political gifts, that they were not those of his elder brother, and that the times in which he had to act called for the opposite of the qualities he did possess. He did not lead; instead he inflamed. 1968 was a hideous year in which the disintegration of people's private lives seemed to mirror exactly the dislocation in the public life of the nation. But it was just such a dislocation in his own sense of himself, added to his strenuous efforts to overcome it, that alone made him able to match himself to the times. Thus the picture given to us by his supporters, unhappily not inaccurate-

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ly, of the existential hero who pitted himself against dreadful odds. We must remember that it was his followers, not his critics, who equated him with Franz. Whatever may be said for the existential hero—and to my mind, there is little—the place for him is not in a position of political command. Politics is not the arena for gesturing against the fates.

This was the time when politics was talked of as theater—not least the theater of the streets—and it was theater that Robert Kennedy brought to it. John Kennedy was ceremonial, but seldom was he theatrical. There was a propriety in his public demeanor, a sense of what was fitting to the occasion. This saved him many times from the extravagance of his own gifts, and might have continued to save him in the severe tests that would have come. But what was on display in Robert Kennedy was too much the raw ends of a private life, and although in this sense he was a man of the times, he could not match the command of his brother. Aggressive as he was in assertions of such authority and influence as fell to him, he in fact showed very little ability to command and shape events.

In Edward Kennedy—and in a way one is grateful for it—we reach mediocrity. If he had not been expected to fulfill the dynastic prophecy, his now long career in the Senate would have seemed humdrum. He has been rather plodding—a carthorse. This is not a criticism. Most of the good work in any Senate is done by carthorses. But it was decided that this was the year to trick him out like Don Quixote and send him out on a nag as worn out as Rosinante, the now tarnished breastplate taken from the wall and clapped to his back. But predictably, he has turned out to be only the Man from La Mancha, a mere caricature of the noble Quixote, and not unnaturally the groundlings in the stalls have asked for their money back. In the face of this preposterous effort at transfiguration, the legend has disintegrated, although it must be said in his honor that personally he has not fallen apart. His desperate political gestures have not reflected a desperate personal injury.

He is not his brother John, he is not his brother Robert; but equally it is not 1960, and neither is it 1968. In these circumstances he has been judged as himself, and it is really no very harsh reflection on him to be found wanting. John Kennedy became the master of his time; Robert Kennedy was the slave to his time; Edward Kennedy is simply out of his time. He gives a picture of America which, even for those to whom he was expected to appeal—the Catholics and the blue-collars and the blacks and the Hispanics—bears little relation to the evidence their own eyes and experience supply. Edward Kennedy's version of America seems less relevant to them than the picture offered by Ronald Reagan. The social and economic injustices that persist do not have the same characteristics they had or appeared to have in the 1960s. The problems that have been neglected foolishly by the presidents of both parties in the 1970s are demonstrated amply by the riots in Miami. It will be Jimmy Carter's own fault if he has to seek reelection in the first long, hot summer since 1968. But these problems cannot now be lumped together as simply as when they could be identified as the Other America or its Unfinished Business. Kennedy's diagnoses and prescriptions still might be taken from Gunnar Myrdal—and, as in the reports to which his name is attached, one suspects that his staff has been raised on sociology readings from Myrdal.

Kennedy's diagnoses and prescriptions sound and are insincere in his speeches, not because he is insincere, but because the sincerity is so misplaced. The kaleidoscope of America has turned since the early and even the late 1960s. The bits and pieces of some real problems may seem to be the same but, even where they are, they have been arranged in a different pattern or in no pattern at all. Even the Other America has been absorbed far more into Middle America, far more than Kennedy's themes will allow him to envisage and acknowledge. Many people have too much more to lose than they did then in order to risk it for the fragile promise of what may turn out to be unreal gains. John Kennedy had a genius for sensing when a social problem had become a national concern, when it had entered the national consciousness and so was ripe for action and leadership. He then used his gifts to focus the consciousness on points where action could be taken effectively. Those who were not suffering personally from social injustice in the 1960s nonetheless felt that it made their own lives less secure. That was the moment on which he always seized with an instinct that was raised to the power of genius. It is always what happens when coalitions of diverse interests are put together, this moment when the majority of people can feel that the bell is tolling for them. Edward Kennedy has tried to reach to just such a feeling, but without taking the trouble to look at the world as it has changed. He therefore has been left with rhetoric emptied of its substance. This is one reason why he speaks so stridently, why he bellows at every meeting as if he were in a cow pasture.

He has had to provide a conviction with his vocal chords which he cannot provide with his words. It is also why he indiscriminately treats every issue, large and small, as if it were a moral choice to which the voters must address themselves with an equal fervor. It is difficult to find the political choice he is asking them to make, because everything is not raised but flattened into a moral decision. John Kennedy's rhetoric usually was addressed to the moment when he could see and his audience could agree that a political choice was available. What was false in his method was that, although he began with the concrete, although he was down to earth in his perceptions, he then too often raised the concrete into airy regions, where the air is heady because it is thin. Edward Kennedy is so little in touch with the concrete today that he has no alternative but to lift political issues into space where

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they are weightless. This is why people do not believe him. I do not think the distrust of him is personal. History has demonstrated often enough that the people will allow a politician his peccadilloes if he promises them what they want and they believe his promises. But they listen to Kennedy and do not believe him, his diagnosis, or his prescriptions, and certainly not his promise to distribute all good to them.

But it is not only the popular voice that has rejected them. So has the informed or educated voice of the country. One likes to think that this marks the passing of yet another of the cankers the legend has nourished. The intelligence that a Kennedy is supposed to be able to command has not rushed to his side. There seems at last to be an end to the belief in the ability of quick if not deep or penetrating minds—seducible or purchasable or both—to identify real problems and their possible political resolution. In this notion, as I said at the beginning, there was always a worm. The intelligence procured too often was confused with mere celebrity. The task forces of which John Kennedy made so much in his campaign, which he used during his administration, and which other presidents have tried to copy, were by and large rosters of celebrities in their fields. This was the fatal connection between the method and what used to be called the style of the Kennedys. Whether it was in the White House or at Hickory Hill, it was celebrity that was called to pay court and advise. Until Edward Kennedy's own campaign began to falter, it was again celebrity that was summoned to McLean. (Celebrity finds no great resources of loyalty in defeat.) The bright new men who were recruited were those who were thought to carry from their upbringing or education the badges of future celebrity. For all too long it beguiled the people. But the whole point of celebrity, the reason it is democracy's most relentless form of vengeance on unusual ability, is that it can be destroyed as easily as created. In the failure of Edward Kennedy's campaign we have seen the rejection of celebrity in the political arena. The celebrity of the Kennedys now is confined to the pages of the *National Enquirer*. This in itself is a gain.

Perhaps a future Kennedy will take to politics. But he will have to stand without the legend. This will be good for him. It already is good for the country. But one can only hope that henceforth it will be possible not only for a Kennedy to excel in some other field than politics, but even (for their own peace) not to excel at all. If that day has arrived, as it seems to have, then there is hope that, for one brother at last, politics will not murder sleep.

The *socios* couldn't take the heat.

The Revolution Tightens Its Belt

by John Womack Jr.

When the Cuban Revolution happened, I had no idea what my father thought of it. He was a postal clerk in Oklahoma, with 14 years to go before retirement. I did not ask him what he thought about revolutions. I thought the Cuban Revolution was terrific. I was a senior at Harvard.

A few times in the following years my father asked me what I thought about Castro and Cuba. This pleased me. It also made me nervous. The only country my father knew besides the United States was Mexico, where he and my mother had gone on a vacation; his politics were a blend of Gene Debs and George Wallace, once expressed in a hopeful vote for LBJ. I told him the Cuban Revolution was terrific. I gave him heavy intellectual reasons. I had become a professor of modern Latin American history at Harvard.

Seven years ago my father retired from the postal service. About five years ago, out of the blue, he proposed that he and I go to Cuba. He said he was "curious about their revolution." This surprised me. I had idly defended the Cuban Revolution, but I no longer thought anything was terrific. I worried whether the trip would disappoint my father (me, him in me?). I said I could not go yet . . . too busy, teaching, research in Mexico, writing. Every few months my father repeated the proposition. I should have known that once he made it, he meant it. Last winter he turned 68. And he paid $14 for his first passport. Then I knew he meant business.

This spring we went to Cuba to see the revolution. We were on the island only six days—two in Havana, two in Cienfuegos, two more back in Havana. We could not see much. But my father saw enough for him to

John Womack Jr. is professor of history at Harvard and author of *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (Knopf).

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drawing by Vint Lawrence

judge: "These goddamned Cubans, what it looks like we can't do, they've done—put a stop to the rip-off and the gravy train. The Russians may be out 90 cents a day for every man, woman, and child here. But these people believe in working, and they make each other work. That alone is worth it." Back in Cambridge, I thought I had learned a lot too, enough to confirm my professorial judgment that this was a revolution delivering more than it cost.

A week later hundreds of Cubans rushed into the Peruvian embassy grounds in Havana, begging to leave Cuba. Then thousands more joined them. With scornful permission from their government, they began to leave. By now 60,000 have come to the United States. Two hundred thousand more may come. It has made me think again.

Our group had seen some of the sights that I suppose are standard for tourists in Cuba: the Institute for Friendship Among Peoples, Old Havana, La Floridita, the Plaza de la Revolución, the collective dairy farm at Cumanayagua, the Gustavo Aldereguía Hospital and the Tricontinental Sugar Terminal in Cienfuegos, Varadero Beach, the Tropicana. And we had talked with the kinds of people whom I suppose groups like ours usually talk with—officials from the Education Ministry and the Central Planning Board, representatives from Poder Popular (local government), a social worker at the dairy farm, teachers and students at the hospital, a manager at the sugar terminal, our bus drivers, and most of all our guides, who calmly and carefully worked 16-hour days for us.

My father treated the guides like encyclopedias: how much did you pay for gas, what happened if you needed more than your ration, who decided if a kid went to high school, then to a trade school or a university? How much money did a doctor make, could an auto repair shop remain a private enterprise, what happened if a Communist cheated, how did you get farmers to move into collective farms, why did they not grow corn, could dentists or lawyers still have private practice? Where were the lines for food, how did you manage credit if refrigerators cost so much, did you fire loafers, were there pensions, were there old-age homes, who paid for funerals? Mostly he had received direct, credible answers. And he had taught one guide a word for "persons who do not behave correctly in a popular manner": goof-offs.

Little incidents had impressed us. In Vedado, at the Friendship Institute, the first morning, we attended a lecture by the *compañera* from Education. A lady about 45, she sat quietly at a table, a blackboard behind her. When she began her words ripped across the top of our heads; this was not a lecture but a lesson she meant for us to learn. My father, who did not understand her or

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the translation, whispered to me, "Mrs. Knight." Yes, the dreaded Mrs. Knight, for centuries the home-room teacher of the eighth grade in our town, the widowed scourge of bullies, cry-babies, nose-pickers, and goof-offs; the legendary drill instructor who transformed grade-schoolers into high-schoolers, children into youngsters, who made us hate her because she made us feel ashamed for not doing our "best" at our "duties," and who pursued us forever after, to instill in us modesty in success, dignity in failure, and the desire to keep trying. The Cuban Mrs. Knight finished her lesson. Questions? She repeated the relevant part of the lesson.

On our first evening in Cuba, as my father and I entered the dining room of the spotless St. John Hotel, I noticed that the head waiter had put another group at the table we had occupied for breakfast. Was this the Chicago Industrial League Champion Softball Team of 1958 with their wives? They did look the same—the men thick-shouldered and hunched over, raw-boned elbows on the table, talking with each other across their wives, their creased, pink faces shining, their grins showing broken teeth; the women husky, backs straight, puffy-faced, silent. They were the Russians. Vacationers? Technicians stationed here, out for an evening? I counted them—one fewer than our group. Why did I feel a stupid relief? My father, who assumed they were blond Cubans until I told him otherwise, told me to ask them if they spoke Spanish. I asked our waiter. "Some," he said. They were served the same dinner we were, one beer or soda apiece, the same busy service. A tall, pale fellow with a Hodding Carter haircut and a Ralph Nader suit appeared beside their table, summoned three Cuban musicians, and sang Russian songs *fortissimo*. He gestured for the Russians to sing along. They smiled sheepishly. They didn't sing. He finished his set, sat, and talked with them. They finished dinner and left quietly. My father paid no more attention to them than he would have to a Chicago softball team. The next morning some of them were changing money at the hotel, the same way we do—carefully. In the evening they had gone.

Twice my father and I left the group and hiked four hours on our own around Old Havana. One morning we strolled alone in Cienfuegos, skipped the bus, and caught a ferry downriver to our group's hotel. On these januts we did not talk much with Cubans, just looked and listened.

In Old Havana, on a clean, quiet back street at about 10 a.m., we walked past women chatting in the doorways. A woman said loudly to her neighbor, "Those bums. Don't they have jobs? What are they doing parading the streets at this hour?" I told her we were tourists, that we had worked to save money to come to see what the Cubans are doing. She laughed and waved us on.

On another street in Old Havana, we passed two men arguing next to a garbage truck in front of an old apartment house. One of them had brought a big load of garbage in a big barrel. The garbage worker objected that the barrel was bigger than regulations allowed. The man waited sullenly for him to take it anyway. The worker shouted, "What the hell do you think regulations are for? What did we make the revolution for?" He took the load anyway, cussing.

At the Cumanayagua farm's school auditorium, at midnight, a social worker answered a sociological question about the transition to life in a collective. Born on this farm before the revolution, the daughter of hired hands, raised a country girl, she explained calmly, in vivid detail, how difficult it was to teach the farm's old families not to foul the new buildings in which they now neatly live.

In Cienfuegos, the biggest, newest store downtown, a bookstore, is fully stocked. It is three or four times the size of the biggest bookstore in our town in Oklahoma.

In Cienfuegos, at noon, schoolchildren crowded around a student in our group. They shouted that they wanted her ballpoint pen. The guides had told us not to give kids anything, so as not to foster bad habits. "How can I give my pen to you?" our student asked the children. "I have only one. There are eight of you. To whom would I give it?" Eight small hands flew up. Eight children danced, waved, cried in harmony, "Me, me . . . !" Flustered, our student asked, "Is *that* what they've taught you?" Eight small hands slowly fell. Eight children sighed, "No." But they all still had their eyes on her pen.

Things we had not seen also impressed us. It surprised and delighted my father that he had seen no advertising, that except for cigars there had been no brands, that beer had come in bottles without labels. It satisfied him that he could find no sign of life insurance schemes, tax-exempt churches, or real estate promoters. After the first evening in the hotel I had expected to see many more Russians. I saw only five or six more, buying souvenirs in another Havana hotel's gift shop. There is a Soviet submarine base in Cienfuegos, but the town showed no trace of Russian sailors. Because Cuba has armed forces in Africa, I expected to see more of the army in public on the island—in Havana along the highways, around Cienfuegos. On the highway we had passed several army farms. But in six days I saw only four soldiers—honor guards at the museum of the revolution. With Mexico City often on my mind, I was amazed that in six days I had not seen a cockroach, a waif, a bloody drunk sprawled on the sidewalk, trash in the streets, piles of garbage rotting in vacant lots, pornography, beggars, prostitutes, police bumming bribes, or classy cars blocking traffic.

Six days had proved nothing, but had led my father and me to the same judgment. What had finally most impressed him, "that they make each other work," had most impressed me too. Cubans generally seemed to know what their country's revolution had meant, to believe in it, to feel some responsibility for it, and

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therefore to count intensely on each other. There had been no sense of the cynicism and resignation rampant in the United States now, historically pervasive in Mexico. Instead, we found a sense of old-fashioned patriotic determination and pragmatic optimism.

The right conditions for building socialism never have existed. They never will exist. In the most favorable conditions, with the best of luck, the struggle is long and painful. That is why socialists have insisted on discipline, personal and political. That is why their sorest problem always has been freedom, personal and political.

There are four principal strains in the Cuban struggle. First, the economy concentrates on the production of sugar. For 200 years sugar production has been Cuba's main economic activity. Twenty years ago it accounted for approximately a quarter of the gross national product. It probably still accounts for a sixth. And sugar's seasonal cycle of production remains disruptive. Throughout the last decade a program of "rationalization" (development of other branches of production) has diversified the economy considerably. But it has been hard to pull sugar's old, powerful, lopsided productive cycle into a broader, more flexible, and more efficient structure. It has been especially hard on an island without oil or coal and a reliance on sugar for 80 percent of the export earnings necessary for the development of the new structure. The strongest reason for Cubans to keep trying is the success they already have had. As the most judicious foreign historian of Cuba recently wrote, "Not all Cubans are well-fed, well-housed, well-cared-for, and well-educated. . . . But the vast majority of the population has access to facilities their ancestors would never have dreamed about"—and that the vast majority of their contemporaries in countries like India, Egypt, or Mexico would hardly believe.

Second, only 90 miles away, the United States remains fundamentally hostile to the Cuban struggle for socialism. As far as it can, through the embargo and otherwise, it aggravates Cuban economic, social, political, and cultural strains. If it could without much risk, it would do to Cuba what it did to Chile: make it "scream" and "destabilize." In such a crisis the most extensive American protests in defense of Cuba would arise from the liberals, who cannot defend Medicaid effectively.

Third, therefore, the Soviet Union provides Cuba its only strategic protection, and the Comecon (the Warsaw Pact countries' equivalent of the Common Market) provides its major markets—for selling sugar to buy the equipment for "rationalization." The Cuban Central Planning Board can assume highly preferential Comecon prices for Cuban sugar and nickel, and can place long orders to import various supplies—wheat, oil, and chemical products, for example. But since nothing can guarantee full Comecon delivery when these supplies are needed, the Board is forced to act as deliveries permit. Thus, however friendly and beneficial these connections, they have skewed Cuban economic plans and action.

Fourth, many of the exiles have kept in touch with kinfolk on the island. A few on both sides may have political motives. Most simply long for reunion. Despite years of separation, they have missed each other.

In 1978 the Cuban economy ran into an exceptional thicket of troubles. The most serious was a lack of coordination between "rationalization" and trade with Comecon that blocked some industrial developments and curtailed construction. The consequent need for tighter and more inventive domestic management prompted mismanagement, at worst embezzlement, and the practice Cubans call *sociolismo*, the time-honored cover-your-ass syndrome, which reduced efficiency. In 1979 "blue mold" ruined the tobacco crop—and cut export earnings. "Sugar rust" appeared in the cane fields. Instead of growing at an expected six percent, the economy grew at 4.9 percent. Meanwhile, thanks to the revolution's baby boom and school system, increasing numbers of reasonably well-educated youngsters were making their claims on jobs and promotions. This year, in addition to the continuing *sociolismo*, tobacco and sugar blights, and an increasing supply of educated young workers, swine fever cut the supply of meat for domestic consumption. The expected economic growth for 1980 is only three percent.

In response, the government in 1979 took two kinds of measures. One was to boost trade with capitalist countries, mainly Japan, Spain, and Canada. This included tourism from the United States, in particular exiles visiting their relatives; last year some 115,000 traveled to the island and spent at least $100,000,000. The other measure was to give a new twist to "rationalization" by compelling established centers of production to operate more efficiently. Last December Fidel started severe criticism of *sociolismo* and "anti-social elements." And the government undertook a tough campaign against *"blandenguería, negligencia, chapucería, burocratismo, acomodamiento"*—spinelessness, negligence, cover-ups, bureaucracy, complacency. It began jailing some egregious *socios*. In February it expanded managerial authority to lay off "surplus" labor. On March 25 it announced a general reform of wages to take effect July 1, reorganizing the categories of wage-earners, raising the minimum wage, and readjusting pay scales.

These changes sharply increased the strain on workers. Already the old "rationalization," requiring the reassignment of many working men and women, had disgruntled some with inconvenient relocations and frustrating alterations of seniority, autonomy, and pay. The slowdown in construction aggravated the housing shortage, which cramped workers most. *Sociolismo* increased the burden on workers trying to do their duty, by favoring other workers' irresponsibility on the job, absenteeism, pilfering, and black-

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marketeering. Visits from exiled relatives revived feelings of loss, and demoralized those who could not understand why exiles thrived in the United States, while they still had to struggle in Cuba. And the new "rationalization" inevitably laid off dutiful workers as well as hustlers, pets, and malingerers. Inspectors hunting *socios* found "anti-social" workers, and sent increasing numbers of them to jail. And the new wage reform, which probably will benefit the more educated youngsters now claiming jobs, promised to disappoint the unskilled already working, especially women.

Under this strain probably 90 percent of the country's 2,500,000 workers calmly continued to discipline themselves, respect the discipline that the government asked of them, and exercise their freedom to argue about what was wrong and how to fix it. But clearly some cracked. A minority of them were probably recent high school or university graduates who, having just begun their careers, felt that the revolution did not offer them enough chances for personal success. Most, however, were probably grade school graduates in their 30s, veteran unskilled workers who had come to feel that the revolution was abandoning them and that the time had come to fend for themselves. Whoever they were, they had broken ranks in the struggle. And because Cubans count so intensely on each other in making the revolution, the resentment against them was ferocious. The government denounced them too as "anti-social," guilty if not of crimes at least of *indisciplina* and selfishness. This they took as persecution, the denial of the freedom they needed to make a career or to survive on their own. Their still dutiful neighbors accused them of asserting their freedom only to gain privileges or to freeload. This they took as harassment. Some petitioned to leave the country. As a matter of policy, the government granted them permission to leave. But they had poor luck finding a country that would accept them.

Several times last year little desperate bands tried to crash into the Venezuelan embassy in Havana. If they could oblige the embassy to grant them "asylum," they could go to Venezuela as "refugees." The Cuban government insisted that they were common criminals. The Venezuelan government did not grant them asylum, but did not rule out granting it later.

In mid-January, 12 desperate Cubans crashed into the Peruvian embassy grounds, "just . . . to get out of the country." A few days later another band descended upon the Venezuelan embassy; two died. Again the Cuban government insisted that the gate-crashers were common criminals. The Peruvian ambassador declared that he did not operate "a travel agency," and that he would report future crashes as breaking and entering. But the Venezuelan government then declared that it would grant asylum in such cases. The Peruvian government followed suit, replacing its ambassador.

On Easter weekend another band crashed into the Peruvian embassy. A Cuban guard was killed, and the Cuban government called the Venezuelan and Peruvian bluff. It removed all guards from the Peruvian embassy, expecting several hundred "anti-socials" to rush the grounds and embarrass the Peruvian government by obliging it to refuse them or resettle them in Peru (which is still on one of the IMF's famous starvation diets). Several hundred did rush the place. But several thousand more came, too. The slogan went around Havana, "Good riddance to the loafers, the layabouts, the lumpen, and the scum." And the airlifts began to Costa Rica. This encouraged the American government and press to crow about an embarrassment to Cuba. And the Cuban government then decided to embarrass the United States by announcing that all the island's "anti-socials" could leave by boat for wherever they pleased. Tens of thousands rushed to the designated port. The boats arrived from Florida. And the great "anti-social" exodus to Key West commenced—and still continues.

Every day my father reads the *Daily Oklahoman*. It often makes him guffaw in disbelief. Every day I read the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times*. They often make me groan in disbelief. Details and Stephen Kinzer's reporting aside, both papers so far have told pretty much the same Cuban story: Cuban Economy Collapsing, Havana Decaying, 10,000 Cuban Dissidents Sacrifice Everything for Freedom, Cuban Refugees Arriving, Cuban Arrivals Swamping Florida, Castro Sending Felons and the Mentally Retarded to America. . . .

I wondered what my father thought of the Cuban stories he had been reading, and I called him. "You can't tell a goddamned thing from the papers," he said. "But I'd bet there's three kinds leaving and coming here. The kind that wants to get together with their families, and will work no matter what or where. The kind that has a strong desire to do some ripping-off, which they've sure come to the best country to do. And the kind that don't have the faintest notion of what they're getting into, that couldn't stand the daily working battle there and won't stand it here."

I think I agree with him, except on the last category. Evidently they could not stand the daily battle in Cuba. But I expect that many of them will stand the battle here. It is more their kind of battle. In Cuba the fight is in close order, one for all and all for one, to make the whole world new and right. Here it is in loneliness, each one against the others, to fulfill one's dream of pride in oneself. Already tens of millions of sad, scared, and desperately hopeful people have come here to fight for themselves, fought bravely, fulfilled a bit of their dreams, sometimes along the way fought for others' dreams, and lived out their lives with a certain satisfaction. Why should these tens of thousands of sad, scared, and desperately hopeful people not do as well? They deserve an honest American welcome to join the Great 1980 American Pursuit of Happiness. They do not ask for much.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Down Here and Out There

"What makes Peckinpah's violence so disturbing, ambiguous, and subversive . . . is that he is able to render [it] so terrifyingly, so graphically, with such raw and unflinching power, yet *still* to respond, and make us respond, fully, even exultantly, to the joy, passion, and exhilaration these men experience when fighting. . . ." Thus writes Paul Seydor in the chapter on *The Wild Bunch* in his new book *Peckinpah: The Western Films* (University of Illinois Press). He goes on to say that "Peckinpah is absolutely aware" of "the changes that history inevitably brings to artistic conventions," that when "he resurrects the epic warrior in the form of the outlaw-hero . . . his prodigious sense of irony . . . expresses that awareness."

It's precisely the lack of subversive exhilaration and of irony that makes *The Long Riders* repellent when it isn't boring. Directed by Walter Hill, this Western was written by four people, including Stacy and James Keach who were also executive producers and who are in it as the James brothers, Frank and Jesse. There have been a lot of previous films about the James boys, but *The Long Riders* didn't remind me of the ones I've seen as much as *The Wild Bunch*, of which it's clearly derivative. So, as I've noted, is a lot of subsequent Peckinpah. More and more, as time goes on, *The Wild Bunch* becomes a landmark.

Of what? Between the time that I wrote my review and the time that it appeared (*TNR*, July 19, 1969), I got a letter from a well-known novelist, typed (he said) at 2 a.m., just after he had seen *The Wild Bunch*, hoping that I would stand against the praise that the picture was getting. I had to reply that my review was going to disappoint him; but because of his letter, I went to see the picture again—and liked it even more. What happened in that film was, I think, significant. Without losing one jot of historical veracity, Peckinpah moved the Western out of John Ford's domain of retrospective myth-exaltation into the contemporary sensibility of Antonin Artaud, out of veneration and idealization of the past into rowelling of the present. Artaud, in "The Theater and Cruelty," wanted "to resuscitate an idea of total spectacle by which the theater would recover from the cinema . . . a spectacle addressed to the entire organism . . . space thundering with images" that would crack psychology and literature and open the audience to the long-suppressed elemental in itself. Many have tried it in the theater, a few with success. Peckinpah, who may never have heard of Artaud, seemed impelled by the same hot drives in his own field: he "resuscitated" spectacle for the cinema, reclaimed violence from the balletics of the gun duel and from anesthetized, remote, random butchery. He made violence hurt and thrill; and he did it through conviction of *fulfillment of being* through bloodshed and through the expression of it—the only word—beautifully. So he was able to strike the Artaudian blow, past our civilized disdain, to the animal in us that wanted waking—at least to test our civilizing.

But the trouble, as subsequent Peckinpah and his imitators have proved, is that sheer Artaudian ecstatic violence is not enough, conditioned as we are. If the violence is to work, the irony that Seydor mentions is very nearly essential, and the characterization that Artaud despised is absolutely essential. Without them, we find ourselves looking, or not looking, at the violence. Unsupported wild killing is unsupportable. It's bad enough in latter-day Peckinpah, where he has floated to his surfaces; it's worse with Walter Hill who never reached depths and who is just a shopper. He got a lot of praise for his most recent film *The Warriors* because it treated New York street-gang fights in a stylized manner. This seemed to me a bankruptcy of praise and vice versa. Because a director had actually read a book (in this case the *Anabasis* from which Hill took the sketchiest framework) and because he could do velour imitations of *West Side Story* with touches of Bertolucci splashed in, he became a Hollywood genius. With *The Long Riders* he keeps plodding down Memory Lane.

He got a cinematographer (Ric Waite) who could imitate the Almendros and Wexler of *Days of Heaven*, even to the long shot of a train cutting black across the green. He put in all the frankness about brothels from Venus-knows-how-many modern Westerns. But mostly he piled on, as he thought, lots of Peckinpah: much explicit violence, much of it in slow motion—shootings, of course, but also sequences like the one in which horsemen fleeing a bank robbery crash through a large shop window, ride through the shop, and come out through the window on the other side.

What makes the picture repellent finally—and "finally" means long before the end—is, first, the triteness of the materials, including the train robbery and the Northfield, Minnesota, raid: not just because they're trite but because we assume that Hill must have known that, too, and had some special treatment in

Films Worth Seeing

Best Boy. Love and reticence shine in this quiet documentary about a 52-year-old retarded man and his aging parents, especially in his unforgettable mother.

Kramer vs. Kramer. If you've seen it, don't see it again: the script evanesces. But the first time around, the acting is fine enough to sustain it.

My Brilliant Career. Spirit, charm, wit—all the things you never expected in an Australian film. A girl of the 1890s strikes out on the road of independence.

Norma Rae. Released again because of Sally Field's Oscar. Besides her heartening performance, this is the best 1935 picture we are likely to get this decade, a real rouser.

SK

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mind. It never appears. Because of this and because there's no true characterization or cogent irony, we soon feel that we are being asked to sympathize with the aestheticized idiocy of homicidal degenerates. There's some attempt at moral "tone" by providing these men with sweethearts and wives. It fails, because the women are not kept in sheltered ignorance like the Mafia wives in *The Godfather*, they encourage the criminality of their men, so the scenes of family life don't do much to deepen the vicious killers. The excuse for the criminality is, as usual, the Civil War, its dislocations in lives and goals, but this is never made remotely credible and it isn't even dragged in substantially until just before the finish.

The picture's gimmick is to have three sets of bandit brothers played by brothers: the James boys by the Keaches, the three Younger brothers by three Carradines, the two Miller boys by two Quaids. If you want to see a film with the most brothers playing brothers, this is it. The exceptional talent of Stacy Keach is, apparently, one more such talent destroyed because it was given to someone without will and ambition. His brother James did actually change expression once in the picture but was better stone-faced. Of all the others, only David Carradine is notable. His "romance" with Belle Starr, sassily played by Pamela Reed of the New York stage, has some spice, and because he is the only one who draws a moderately interesting character, his knife fight in a bar has some excitement.

The next episode of *Star Wars*, called *The Empire Strikes Back*, is ready: and the critical hoopla is already rolling. There's about as much relation between *Empire* and the old quest sagas as there was between *The Warriors* and Xenophon, but that won't stop those whose analogical juices drool when box-office receipts soar.

Everything you liked, or didn't like, is back, with at least as much ingenuity as last time, only now there's a 26-inch Muppet in the cast operated by (says *Time*) the man who works Miss Piggy. What a comedown for him. The one surprise in *Empire* is that it was directed by Irvin Kershner, whose previous work has been almost entirely in realistic contemporary drama like *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* and *Loving*. Insofar as the director of a film like this one is responsible for it—there's a brigade of special-effects directors and artists and technicians—Kershner does all right.

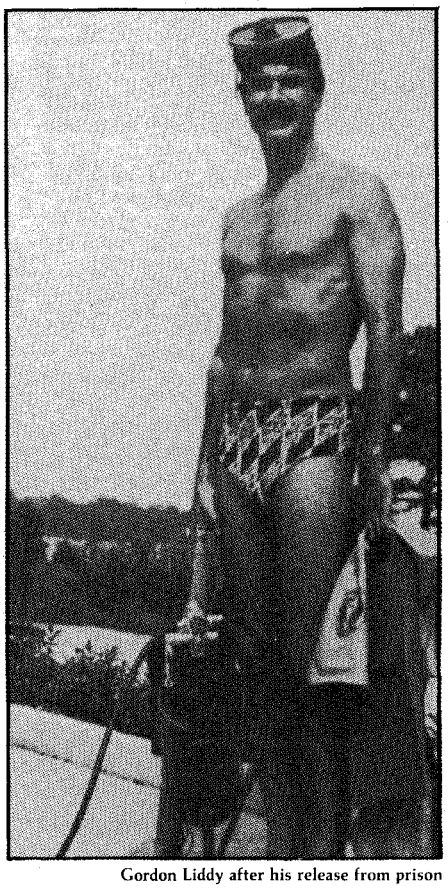
The principals are the same as in *Star Wars*, including the unseen James Earl Jones as the voice of Darth Vader. The story is less like a disguised Western-in-space this time, more like an undisguised space-serial of the 1930s made by 12 Aga Khans. *Star Wars* has so far grossed $400 million worldwide. *Empire* will do as well, I suppose. I wish I could care.

That's a lie. I don't wish that at all. Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

Will
by G. Gordon Liddy
(St. Martin's Press; $13.95)

Gordon Liddy's account of his role in Watergate and its aftermath is the least interesting revelation in this remarkable memoir. Liddy's upbringing and his development into a full-fledged American fascist is what truly fascinates. How a self-proclaimed admirer of nazism could have been appointed to the responsible positions in government that Liddy held is the fundamental question posed by this account. What heights of power he might have reached if his clandestine operation had succeeded must remain in the realm of frightening speculation.

Let there be no mistake about it: Gordon Liddy—special agent to the FBI, assistant district attorney, special assistant to the secretary of the treasury, White House aid, and general counsel for the Republican Committee to Re-elect the President—was and remains a true American fascist. In an age when the label "fascist" is often carelessly and metaphorically applied to all manner of conservative and reactionary politicians, it is important to recognize the genuine article when it emerges on the political scene. An unabashed admirer of Adolf Hitler, a fervent believer in the racial superiority of the Teutonic stock, and a man who would stop at nothing—not even mass murder—to accomplish his bizarre goals, Gordon Liddy does not shrink from the charge that he is a fascist. He remains proudly silent when a prison guard says to him "It's true what they say. You are a fascist." Unfortunately for those of us who despise fascism, Liddy is also an excellent writer and a fascinating character, which makes it difficult to



Gordon Liddy after his release from prison

dismiss his book out of hand as the nostalgic ravings of a political lunatic born a generation too late in the wrong country. As I was suffering through *Will*—suffering because of the guilt I experienced for enjoying his engaging prose—I kept thinking of it as the *Mein Kampf* of a failed Führer.

The book opens with the young Liddy and his German maid eagerly listening to Hitler's speeches on the family's Emerson short-wave radio. "He sent an electric current through my body, and, as the massive audience thundered its absolute support and determination, the hair on the back of my neck rose and I realized suddenly that I had stopped breathing." The adolescent Liddy bemoans the fact that his powerful German genes have been mingled with weaker Italian genes, and determines to make himself as *"eiskalt"* as any full-blooded Teuton. He memorizes and learns to love the rousing Nazi music, is

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taught the fascist salute in his German-Catholic parochial school, and makes his first lethal gun at age nine. These childish manifestations of his admiration for nazism remain with him throughout his life. He selects his future wife's characteristics, and ultimately his wife, on the basis of Nazi racist ideology: "a highly intelligent, tall, fair, powerfully built Teuton . . . to make a reality of my genetic potential. . . . I had earned the right to seek my mate from among the finest genetic material available." He takes his family and friends to Nazi movies. He sings Nazi marching songs in prison to bait the black inmates. And he proudly boasts to his lawyer: "My current chess partner is the son of the war-time SS Gestapo commander of Brussels. We get on famously. He knows more songs than I do, and shower time sounds like the invasion of Poland." He affects the Nazi salute even in court.

His approving comparisons are almost always drawn from the movement he most admires: "As Adolf Hitler was referred to throughout the Third Reich, simply as *Der Führer*, so J. Edgar Hoover was referred to throughout the FBI as *The Director*." When his children's school complained to Liddy that his kids were starting fights rather than complying with the school's philosophy of non-violence, Liddy was quick to respond: "In the late 1930s, French children were taught that philosophy, while German kids were taught to be fierce in battle. Given the destruction of the numerically superior French Armies by the Wehrmacht in about 30 days, I preferred the German approach."

Nor did Liddy remain a closet fascist during his halcyon days of power in government. He was always out front about his sympathies. When asked to organize an intelligence operation from within the White House, he gave it an "appropriate" title: "When I organize, I am inclined to think in German terms and the acronym was also used by a World War II German veteran's organization belonged to by some acquaintances of mine, *Organisation Der Emerlingen Schutz Staffel Angehorigen: ODESSA*." This organization of Liddy's "acquaintances" is, of course, a Nazi group whose primary purpose was to protect German war criminals charged with genocide and other war crimes.

He told Attorney General John Mitchell—whom he called, in Mitchell's presence, "General," with a hard German "G," that his intelligence task force was an *Einsatzgruppe*: the name given to the dreaded special action groups of the SS whose mission it was to massacre Jews and other "racially inferior" people in the territories captured by the Nazis. He gave the German name, *Nacht und Nebel* ("night and fog") to his planned clandestine operations to kidnap, drug, and detain in Mexico the leaders of groups that were planning demonstrations at the Republican Convention.

It should have come as no surprise to any intelligent person that an unguided missile with Liddy's perverse philosophy would not hesitate to volunteer to assassinate Jack Anderson or E. Howard Hunt. (Liddy seemed ready to kill almost anybody who stood in his way or challenged his masculinity, from Jeb Magruder, to John Dean, to an innocent passer-by who might have observed a surreptitious entry by his ODESSA troops, to a black prisoner who playfully took his glasses and began "posturing" with them: "I'd have had to kill the man had he not returned the glasses.") Liddy

COAL

Often and oftenest at night we would
run out of coal, and with the seven of us
in the house and someone always sick, there was
a need to keep the fires up high against
the vigilant damp of Irish winter.
Coal was my chore. I so loved fire it was
a sort of family joke to wonder that
I managed not to roast myself with all
my tending. But I didn't love the night.
Determined, I would take the tallest scuttle
and set out for the shed as for a journey—
hardly far-off enough behind the house,
it was, to notice stars between the roofs.

I propped the door to let the houselight in,
and shadow layered onto shadow, dark
grading finally down to the black coal pile
along the wall. Fumbling for the shovel
on my knees, I watched my moon-luminous hands
phase-out, extinguished by coal dust and dark.
At last I found the handle and relief.
The first shovel loads resounded on
the bucket bottom like huge hailstones pounding
a tin shed roof, and then the sound went duller.
I made the shovel fly, ramming and scooping
thick chunks of night until they bounced
around me and I turned to see the flat
black oval of the scuttle's mouth transformed:
heaped-up into a contoured silhouette.
Two-handed I would lug away its iron weight.

Grass patches bearded with a frosty down
were slippery and the ground uneven,
so rushing back into the house I let
my motion top the scuttle off. Tomorrow,
tomorrow there would be again behind
the house a trail of holes in the bright morning
for me to gather up and take away,
like shattered pieces of the night I feared.

Once safe inside I played the proud provider,
but not before, almost against my will,
just through the door I had to pause and stare,
confronted by the hearth, perhaps half-stunned
by light, to contemplate this glad paradox,
this miracle of burning rock.

Jason Sommer

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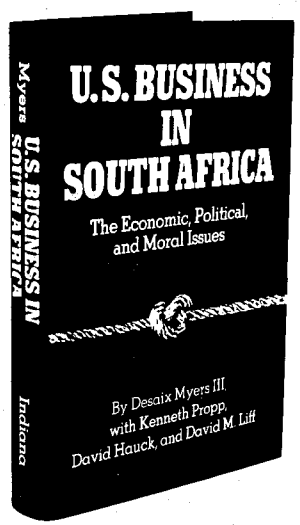
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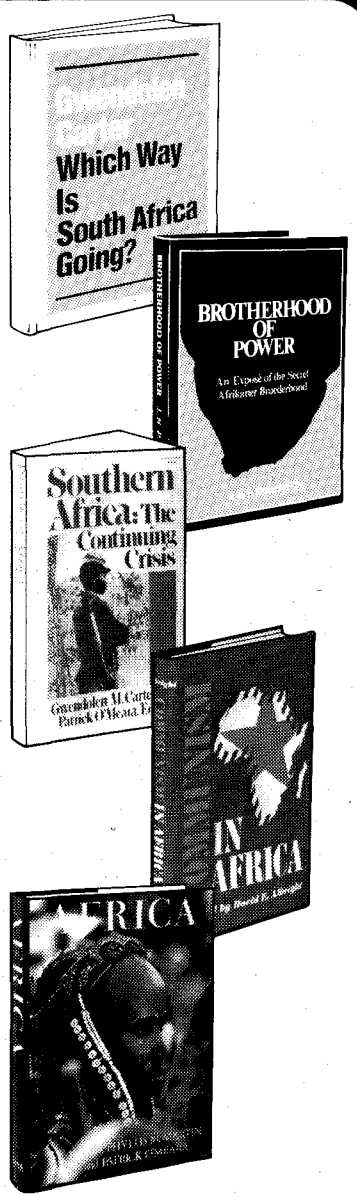
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was apparently prepared to do anything—short, he says, of sexually assaulting a child—to assure the reelection of his president and the straightening out of his misguided country.

It is interesting to wonder how an American boy—with a good education, a professional family, a religious background—could become an authentic fascist in the post-Hitler period. This is a question that probably will have to be answered by psychologists rather than by political analysts. But the far more troubling question is how such a self-proclaimed fascist—and not a mere advocate of fascism, but an active practitioner of some of its most brutal tenets—could have passed through all the entry barriers to positions of high authority, responsibility, and power in our government and party system. It is inconceivable that an extreme leftist who had expressed similar allegiance to—and had indeed acted on—the philosophy and methods of Stalin could have passed these barriers. This is not to argue that practitioners of Stalinism should be given positions of trust in our government; I don't believe they should. Nor is it to argue for ideological or political tests of office; I do not favor those. It is to express shock that a person with Gordon Liddy's record of past actions—a record that has remained consistent throughout his life and career—should have been given access to the White House Situation Room, to the lethal weapons of our intelligence system, and to the power wielded by a public prosecutor.

But Watergate was only the manhole cover of the Liddy sewer. Had the break-in succeeded, as it might have but for some careless planning and bad luck, Liddy's influence might well have grown within the White House and the Republican party. Operation ODESSA and Gemstone might have expanded and achieved lives of their own. They might have become important parts of a second Nixon presidential term. And so might G. Gordon Liddy have become an even more important part of the US government. He aspired, it seems, to succeed J. Edgar Hoover as director of the FBI, and it is possible that he would have been appointed by President Nixon to that position of awesome power had the Watergate break-in not been discovered. Liddy had been assigned the task of drafting a memorandum on the performance of the FBI under Hoover's leadership, and Nixon reportedly regarded Liddy's product as among the finest memoranda he had ever received. The specter of an authentic fascist as director of the FBI is haunting and scary. But for a piece of carelessly placed tape on a Watergate door, it might have become a deadly reality.

Even after the failures, the prison term, and the publication of this frightening memoir, Liddy seems to have developed a following, not only among elements of the intelligence and military communities, but also among the general public. There are, it appears, more admirers of fascism in this country than many suspect. (In a recent primary in North Carolina, the leader of the National Socialist Party of America—a self-proclaimed Nazi party which sports swastikas and advocates Hitler's policies—garnered 56,000 votes, 43 percent of the total cast, for the Republican nomination for state attorney general.) Revelation of fascist abominations—planned or accomplished—seems only to bring its secret admirers out from under their rocks. G. Gordon Liddy's *Mein Kampf* must, unfortunately, be taken very seriously.

Alan M. Dershowitz

Alan M. Dershowitz is professor of law at Harvard Law School.

Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography by Jean Rhys

(Harper & Row; $10.95)

When Jean Rhys died last year, at the age of 88 (or 89, or 84, depending on which account you read) she had had two periods of literary success, but no real literary career. She had written novels for a time in the late 1920s and 1930s, and had been much praised for the perfection of her form and style (though reviewers in places like Boston regretted her sordid subjects); then she disappeared, to reemerge in 1966 with the brilliant *Wide Sargasso Sea* and two collections of stories, and to be praised again, this time mainly for her feminist consciousness.

The trouble with Jean Rhys was that though she wrote (off and on) for 50 years, she fit none of the standard categories of writing women. She was not a literary lady (being neither literary nor a lady); she was not a professional woman-novelist, of the sort who turns up at authors' luncheons, wearing lavender hair; she didn't move in literary circles, or broadcast on the BBC, or write reviews for the posh Sunday papers, or appear at rallies protesting this or that. She married three times, but all her husbands were obscure men; and so (with one exception) were her lovers. And so was she, until near the end of her life. She was close to 80 before she became famous; and by then it was too late to change—she could only go on writing.

There are two explanations for Jean Rhys's extraordinary obscurity. One is simply the life she lived. She was born in Dominica, in the Windward Islands, daughter of a Welsh doctor who sent her to England to be educated when she was 16, and then promptly died. She spent one term in school, tried a term at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and then went on the road as a chorus girl. After that for a while she was a kept mistress (those were still, after all, the Edwardian days). When that arrangement came to an end she went to Paris, married a Dutch-French poet, and lived a life of left-bank bohemian poverty. It was in Paris that she had her only contact with the literary world: she met, and had an affair with, Ford Madox Ford, who encouraged her to write.

This is the life of a) a colonial, and b) a demi-mondaine, and neither is very likely to get on in literary circles. She didn't choose to be a colonial, but being one can be a handicap, as the careers of writers as gifted and various as Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, and Shirley Hazzard all show. But she did choose to be fallen: she drank and she had lovers and abortions, and two of her husbands had police records. As a literary life it was, one may say, unusual; and it separated her entirely from the centers of literary power, where reputations and careers are made.

The other explanation has to do with her motive for writing. Surely no other modern novelist has been so completely without literary ambition. She carried the journal-notes that became *Voyage in the Dark* around with her, through

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decades of cheap hotel rooms and bed-sitters, before she turned them into a novel, and when she was rediscovered, after 20 years of invisible silence, she had a book of stories written that she had not even tried to publish. "I never wanted to write at all," she said in one interview, "but of course I did discover that if you write you can forget, and so I did it again and again," and in another, "I wrote because it relieved me." This may sound a bit self-dramatizing, but I think it was true—she was one writer who wrote out of private necessity, to exorcise her demons.

One has a strong (and natural)

photo of Jean Rhys by Jerry Bauer

impulse to read her novels simply as one continuous chronicle of a disastrous private life. They are all told from the point of view of a young woman who is always the same young woman, and they follow the line of Jean Rhys's own life, from the Caribbean childhood to the bohemian years in London and Paris, and they include the same disasters—the abortion, the dead child, the affair with Ford. Jean Rhys has encouraged such an autobiographical reading by referring to her heroines, in interviews, as "I."

Yet at the end of her life she expressed annoyance that readers were taking her novels as a direct record of her own miseries, and pitying her because her heroines had such grim times. "I realize," she wrote,

> that I am being gently pushed into my predestined role, the role of victim. I have never had any good times, never laughed, never got my own back, never dared, never worn pretty clothes, never been happy, never known wild hopes or wilder despairs. In short, I have never been young or if I was I've forgotten all about it. Wailing, I have gone from tyrant to tyrant; each letdown worse than the last. All this, of course, leads straight to Women's Lib.

You might reply, of course, that if she felt herself thrown to the women's libbers it was her own fault—after all, she wrote the novels. Yet she was right to protest. Certainly she made her novels out of her own experiences (doesn't everyone?); but they are not autobiographical in the sense of describing an entire life. Rather they turn over, again and again, one human situation—the condition of absolute loneliness. Her heroines have no connections, no hopes, and no will: they float in their lives like ships dead in the water, accepting indifferently the movements of the tides. This was her only subject, and she worked it out with a cold perfection. No doubt there were good times in her life—it's impossible to imagine that anyone could live to be 88 without some intervals of laughter and hope—but as an artist she could make no use of them. Her myth of existence was made of the bad times.

The prevalence of bad times in Jean Rhys's novels makes them seem one sad story, retold. The heroine may be called Marya or Sasha or Julia, the setting may be Paris or London, but her situation is essentially the same—she is alone, frightened, and an exile; she drinks too much; she drifts through days and nights; she is made love to; she endures. You can extract characteristic sentences from the novels, and have no clue as to which one they come from:

> She spent the foggy day in endless, aimless walking, for it seemed to her that if she moved quickly enough she would escape the fear of something cruel and stupid that had caught her and would never let her go.

> I've realized, you see, that life is cruel and horrible to unprotected people.

> I don't give a damn for my idiotic body of a woman, anyhow.

> You're a victim. There's no endurance in your face. Victims are necessary so that the strong may exercise their will and become more strong.

> The problems of her existence had gotten beyond her.

These are all from the first novel, *Quartet*, but they could be from any novel or story: they are the constituent principles of Jean Rhys's world. In that world, fear is real and kindness is not; the strong are cruel and the weak suffer;

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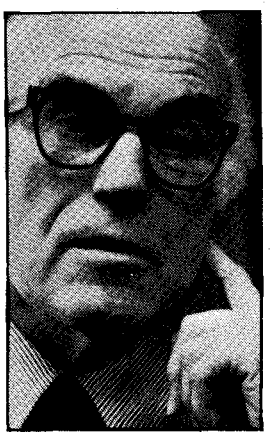

History of the Idea of Progress

Robert Nisbet

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money is important and sex is not—it's just one more thing that is done to you. And drink is important, because it alters unendurable reality (Jean Rhys is one of the great creators of drunkenness—no doubt it was the drinking habits of her heroines, as much as their promiscuity, that shocked the reviewers of Boston).

All these bad times seem to have come pretty directly from Jean Rhys's own early life. But they are not that life; or they are life transformed, and quite self-consciously transformed. "The things you remember have no form," she once said. "When you write about them, you have to give them a beginning, a middle, and an end. To give life shape—that is what a writer does. That is what is so difficult." And also what is so important: since life has no shape, art is necessary; it provides some shape, at least, to hang on to. To be an artist, then, is a mode of survival.

And certainly Jean Rhys was an artist. Any page of her prose is instantly recognizable; she could write brilliantly from the beginning. Although 27 years separated *Voyage in the Dark*, the last of her early novels, from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the first of her later books, and though the latter is ostensibly a period-novel (the life of the first Mrs. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*), yet the style is essentially the same—the words plain and truth-telling, but the effect trance-like, like the movements in a dream:

> He started to laugh too.
> 'Shut up laughing,' I said.
> I thought, 'Shut up laughing,' looking at Walter's hand hanging over the edge of the mantelpiece.
> I said, 'Oh, stop laughing at me. I'm sick of it.'
> 'What's the joke?' I said.
> They went on laughing.

It is the appropriate style for the fictional form that is Jean Rhys's most original achievement: she invented a novel that could do without the common motive power of fiction—a central, propelling will. Her novels are will-less and momentum-less; things happen—characters appear and disappear, money is found or not found, a dress is bought, a drink is drunk—but they aren't willed by anyone. The central consciousness seems displaced, disconnected, entranced, not so much an agent as a spectator of her own defeats, which she reports with a sad and harrowing honesty.

Most of the defeats are at the hands of men, and you can see why Jean Rhys was taken up, when she was rediscovered, by feminists—though I think they misunderstand her (and Jean Rhys thought so, too). The feminist line is that her central characters represent essential female consciousness, victimized by man-dominated society. But it isn't man that the Jean Rhys heroine fears and hates: it's humankind. "You want to know what I'm afraid of?" Sasha asks in *Good Morning, Midnight*.

> 'All right, I'll tell you. . . . I'm afraid of men—yes, I'm very much afraid of men. And I'm even more afraid of women. And I'm very much afraid of the whole bloody human race. . . . Afraid of them?' I say. 'Of course I'm afraid of them. Who wouldn't be afraid of a pack of damned hyenas?'

This is not a statement about sex roles, or sexual exploitation; it is about the cruelty and the exploitation and the savagery of human beings at large. And nothing can be done about it: the novels are not cautionary tales, or polemics; they are simply reports of the way things are. Jean Rhys's heroines embrace their disasters sadly, but they learn nothing from them, and nothing is changed by their pain—because, one must infer, nothing can be changed.

Jean Rhys began to write her autobiography at the age of 86. She was ill, and her hands shook so that she could not write legibly, but had to dictate her words. It is a testimony to her powers of survival, or perhaps to her will to write, that she managed to get down as much as she did. The book is unfinished and fragmentary, a series of short vignettes, mainly from her Dominican childhood and her down-and-out days in Paris and London; nevertheless it is an extraordinary document—not a mere footnote to the novels, but a marvelous book in its own right. It differs from the novels covering the same ground in being less inward, less extreme in the consciousness that it records, and altogether more cheerful. There are no drinking bouts here, no haunting fears, and no despair. It is, you might say, a more balanced account, making use of the good times that the novels have no room for.

The book is especially fine in its memories of Dominica, her Paradise Lost, the world before her Fall. These episodes have the staring honesty of the novels, but they also contain happiness and tenderness, as well as the soft sadness that stretched-out memory has—it was all so long ago, nothing is left. Nothing.

But you can already see in these early incidents the Rhys heroine beginning to form her passive, isolated identity. She watches life, but never asks questions about it; she becomes good at "blotting things out" by refusing to think about them; she has a vague, persistent feeling that she'll always be lost in the real world, and defeated by it. Later episodes, in London and Paris, add to these feelings her reflections on sex and money, her gradual growing sadness, her fears. By the end, the whole heroine is there, ready to enter the first novel.

The most extraordinary piece in *Smile Please* is not these memories, though, but a diary that Jean Rhys kept in 1947, when she was living alone in a Maidstone pub (perhaps while her third husband was in prison). It is a harsh self-interrogation of her life, her work, and her reasons for doing it; she calls it "The Trial of Jean Rhys." "Do you believe in God?" the prosecution asks.

> I do not know.
> *In human love?*
> Yes.
> *Still?*
> Yes.
> *In humanity?*
> No.

Later on the prosecution asks why she feels bound to write. She replies: "I must write. If I stop writing my life will have been an abject failure. It is that already to other people. But it could be an abject

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failure to myself. I will not have earned death." Once more, this is self-dramatizing, but we must accept it as her truth. So writing was not only an exorcism, it was an expiation, too.

Jean Rhys is the clearest case I know of a writer who wrote to survive. She wrote about herself because, she said, "I am the only truth I know"; and she wrote about the worst things in her life—the fears, the betrayals, the hatred, and the suffering—in order that, by giving them shape, she might lay her ghosts. All of her work is played on one sad string. That is a definition of a minor writer, and no one would deny that that is the right term for her. But the tunes that she played on that one string are shapely and beautiful and haunting. Now that she has been received into the literary world that she was so indifferent to, I can't think that she will ever be allowed to return to obscurity again. She is one of our classics.

Samuel Hynes

Samuel Hynes's most recent book is *The Auden Generation* (Viking).

The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960 by Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund

(Anchor Press/Doubleday; $17.50)

During the 1947 Hollywood hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which resulted in a blacklist of movie writers, directors, and performers, a peculiar script governed conversation on the left. One could not concede that the afflicted were or had been Communists without arousing the suspicion that one was insufficiently sympathetic to their plight. One could scarcely acknowledge that there were such things as Communists. The committee was on a "witch hunt," and who believed in witches? So the protests against the hearings tended to be as programmed as the speeches in the pro-Soviet wartime film, *Mission to Moscow*, except that all the accused in Russia were portrayed as fascist collaborators, whereas here they were all described as pure-in-heart New Dealers. Frank talk about relations between the communist and non-communist left in Hollywood and elsewhere was suspect.

Let it be said at once, then, that this book, though dedicated "to those who resisted," grants that there were Communists in Hollywood and that the Un-American Activities Committee did a pretty accurate job of picking them out. Unlike the jacket copy, which sticks to code words like "activist" and "progressive" to characterize the views of Ring Lardner Jr., John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, and Dalton Trumbo, the authors are not afraid of the word "Communist" or even, now and then, "Red." The lately sainted Lillian Hellman is identified in one phase as a Communist "in everything but name." Yes, the Hollywood Ten, and several score others, were members of the party and followed the party line right through the Moscow trials and the Hitler-Stalin pact: "Communist screenwriters defended the Stalinist regime, accepted the Comintern's policies and about-faces, and criticized enemies and allies alike with an infuriating self-righteousness, superiority, and selective memory which eventually alienated all but the staunchest fellow travelers." No revelations here, but only with the ground thus cleared can one begin to think about the role of the non-communist liberal during those unhappy years.

This is not an elegantly written book; the style lurches from the stuffy to the sappy and many sentences manage to combine the two: "But what lay within them which resonated to the social forces of the decade and motivated them to transform their frustration into activism?" Images fly about on collision courses: "In sum, there was no contagious bacillus—certainly nothing that need necessarily infect or politicize the entire Hollywood community—apparent in the clash between the writers and their masters." Many passages belong in the The Young Person's Guide to Communism in Hollywood: "The screenwriters who were active in the Hollywood left-wing movement combined artistic talent and a high level of intelligence with considerable moral courage and elevated social ideals." "American radicals have a deepseated faith in the political tradition from which this government and society stem." An awake editor could have reduced this longish work by 50 pages simply by eliminating the third or fourth iteration of an elementary point.

Still, though it may take some teeth-gritting, the persevering reader can benefit. The authors set their scene convincingly—writers going west in the 1930s from New York, hotbed of radicalism in assorted forms, at a time of depression at home and fascism abroad. The writers were needed by the big studios, but not valued; their work was subject to all the indignities for which the moguls were famous. Servitude to Philistia bred solidarity. The featured role of the Communists and their, pardon me, fellow travelers in all the best causes of the Popular Front period is accurately recounted. They were early anti-fascists, early unionizers, early opponents of racial abuse. And their energy in pressing those causes was prodigious.

More, the authors are right that the Un-American Activities Committee had no useful business investigating communism in Hollywood. The most ingenious conspiracy-monger had trouble making a case that Hollywood's Communists had slipped their ideology into their movies. Not that they wouldn't have liked to—but the studio heads did not court controversy. The writers were on a tight leash. Granted, there were a few drippy pro-Russian films during the war, like *North Star*, *Song of Russia*, and *Mission to Moscow* (which James Agee called "a great glad two-million-dollar bowl of canned borscht"), but it would have been out of character if Hollywood, so susceptible to the winds of fashion, had not done its bit for the US-Soviet alliance. Anyway, none of this was fit matter for the scrutiny of Washington.

No, when the Un-American Activities Committee, under J. Parnell Thomas, the crooked congressman from New Jersey, descended upon Hollywood in 1947, it was out to do a job on Harry Truman and the Democratic party and attract some headlines along the way. The fabled movie producers, Jack Warner playing the lead, succumbed to sheer craven avarice and disgraced the nation with a political blacklist.

Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund navigate these familiar channels ade-

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quately, but when they reach trickier waters they flounder. The whirlpool of the Popular Front occasionally sends their compass quite out of whack: "What terminated in 1939 was the existence of a powerful, activist, progressive alliance which could provide effective opposition to the periodic eruptions of reaction which sweep across the American landscape, reminding everyone of who's really in charge here." Down, lads, down. They grant that "the liberal perception of the Reds as duplicitous, opportunistic, cynical, untrustworthy and irresponsible obstructionists was . . . not hopelessly wide of the mark," but nonetheless lay much of the blame for the breakup of the Popular Front after the Hitler-Stalin pact on the non-Communists. How come? Well, some liberals behaved just like the most hardened CP troopers: "Both groups were loyal to a party and a leader, both engaged in harsh polemics with their adversaries and rivals, both lived with certain compromises of conscience." And "anti-Communist liberals, believing that communism was a 'greater menace' than fascism, placed moderate politics and politicians in the service of the Right. . . . " The view that allegiance to Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal was akin to allegiance to Josef Stalin and the slaughter of kulaks and that the choice for liberals was between communism and fascism certifies the authors for incarceration in the mentality of the Popular Front.

It takes a determined innocence or hyper-nostalgia to write: "Those who stayed Communists fought the HUAC with the same principles which had animated their anti-fascism and their wartime patriotism: justice, decency, fairness, equality, democratic rights, and (for some) socialism—democratic socialism, that is." The authors rhapsodize upon the sincerity of the party members. But the issue was, of course, not whether individual Communists were sincere in their belief that they were pursuing the highest principles; doubtless they were and so were able to kid themselves and others for a long time. (Is the reader to laugh or cry at the news that the "shock" of Khrushchev's 1956 "revelations" about Stalin's crimes "dislocated" Albert Maltz and put John Howard Lawson "in a terrible bind"?) What the liberals whom our authors chastize began to learn during the 1930s was that left-right was not the only moral division, nor perhaps the most important one. There were barbarians on the left, too, and their apologists showed little enthusiasm for justice, decency, fairness, equality, or democratic rights, not to mention democratic socialism, where these goods offended the Kremlin. Their consciences remained untroubled by the fate of Czechoslovakia; their devotion to oppressed minorities stopped at the borders of the USSR.

Many liberals of the period must be faulted severely for not coming strongly enough to the defense of the blacklisted politicals. But those who did rise to the occasion did so knowing that if the roles had been reversed, their sometime allies would not have moved the muscle of a typewriter finger in their behalf. The record of the Communist party and its friendly associations like the Civil Rights Congress and the National Lawyers Guild does not glow with examples of aiding individuals or groups with unorthodox opinions. Quite the contrary. Nobody was more determined to silence Trotskyites than the committed Stalinist.

That was the rot within the Popular Front, which so many good-hearted, dim-witted liberals refused to acknowledge for so long, at considerable cost to their own principles. It was more than ideological rigidity, more than the Stalin-Hitler pact. It was that no cause could be supported on the left, no position held, no truth uttered that did not accord with the approved line—which, incidentally, had precious little to do with freedom or tolerance.

The Popular Front had its notable achievements, but if it was fueled by idealism, it was also befouled by hypocrisy. And all the glory and shame of the time was, appropriately, dramatized in Hollywood.

Walter Goodman

Walter Goodman is the author of *The Committee: A History of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). He is executive editor of WNET/Thirteen.

The Fall of the Shah
by Fereydoun Hoveyda
(Wyndham Books; $9.95)

Fall of the Peacock Throne: The Story of Iran
by William H. Forbis
(Harper & Row; $15.95)

The Rise and Fall of the Shah
by Amin Saikal
(Princeton University Press; $14.50)

The official establishment of Khomeini's theocracy in December 1979 appears so strange and the continued detention of the American hostages is so outrageous that we tend to forget our earlier shock over the collapse of the monarchy in Iran. One would expect the books under review to give us an opportunity to recall, and perhaps to understand, the suddenness of the massive eruption of 1978. But only Hoveyda's book provides us with some insight into the phenomenon all three titles purport to explain: the fall of the shah.

A reporter for Time-Life, William H. Forbis traveled in Iran during the reign of the shah, has read a few books on Persian history and culture, the Iran Almanac, two or three works by political scientists, and a Persian cookbook; and now he has written *Fall of the Peacock Throne.* As a collection of mildly amusing trivia and as a tourist guidebook to pre-revolution Iran, his book may seem to deserve a charitable review. But with only an eight-page chapter about the revolution added *ex post facto* after 282 anecdotal pages, it can hardly be said to have any bearing on the fall of the peacock throne.

Amin Saikal is a young Afghan scholar who has written a PhD dissertation on

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the foreign policy of Iran for an Australian university. The dissertation, totally devoid of analysis and—if we be permitted not to accept such an unusual array of newspapers and periodicals as *The Australian, Canberra Times, The AGE, Kabul Times, Daily Telegraph, Pamir,* and *Sydney Morning Herald* as reliable primary sources on Iran—based on secondary and tertiary materials, now has been published and aggressively advertised under a misleading general title by Princeton University Press. Perhaps in order to justify the broader title, Saikal attempts to link the shah's foreign and domestic policies by means of such baffling statements as this:

> In order to achieve his prime objective, following the overthrow of Mossadeq, the Shah found it essential to manipulate the organizational and institutional setting in which his regime acted in an attempt to create relative political and economic stability. In this context, the regime's foreign policy became its domestic policy writ large; and the conduct of the former was conditioned largely by the needs of the latter. The Shah, along with strengthening his regime's links with the United States, sought to centralize politics . . . around the institution of monarchy!

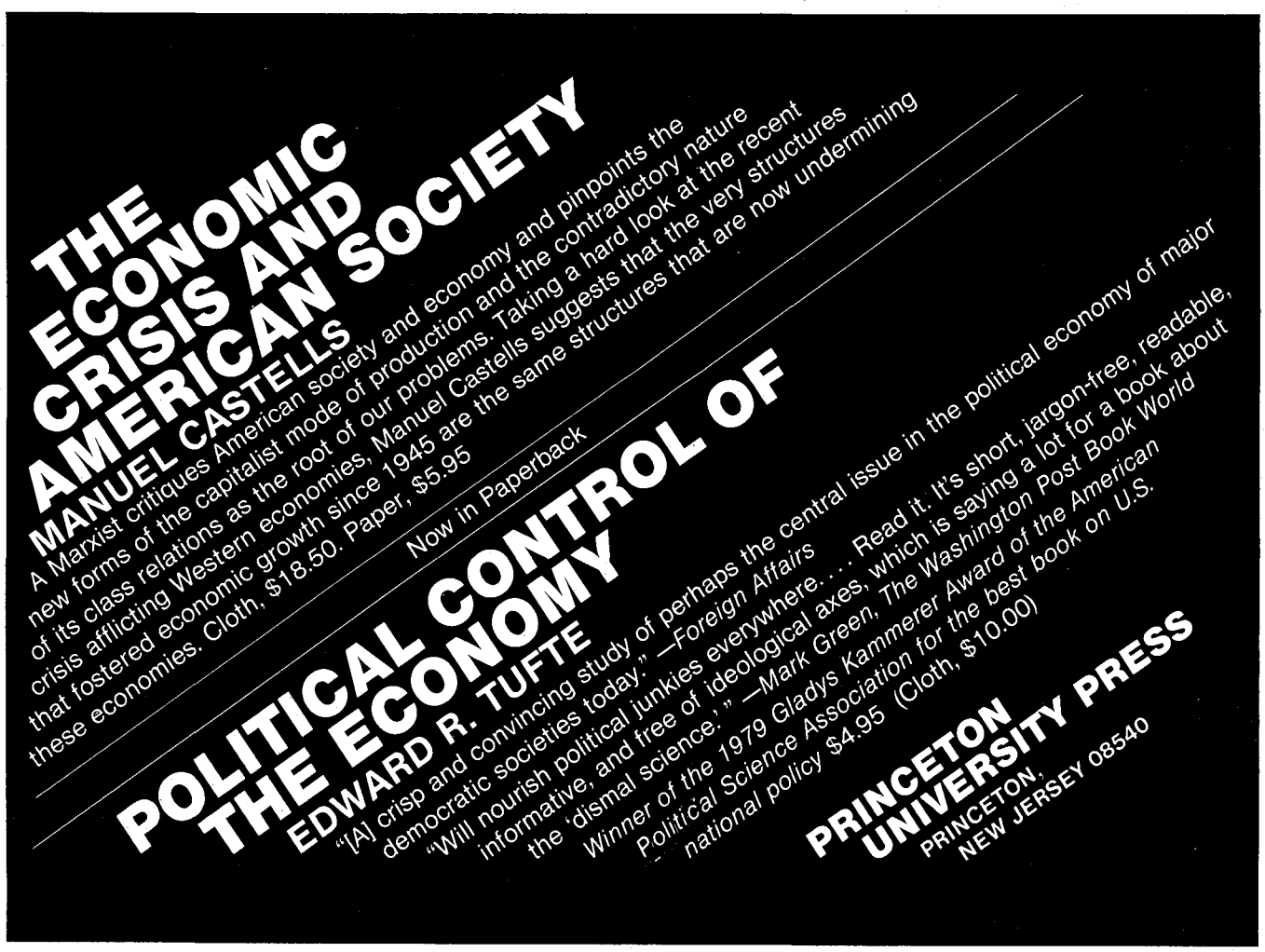
Needless to say, such attempts to broaden the scope of the book simply increase its incoherence.

Mistaking his publisher's greed for his own insight, Saikal is moved to remark, anachronistically, that by the end of a trip in late 1976, "I was firmly convinced that the Shah did not even seem to have enough time to bring about the urgently needed policy changes. At the time, this was a very unpopular view to advocate." But subsequent events vindicated Saikal: "I needed no more than a few additional pages to confirm the thrust of my thesis and judgments." The criteria on which this self-evaluation is based are unknown to this reviewer. Be that as it may, the book is out, and in a deceptively scholarly format. That the scholarly appearance is bogus is not difficult to establish, even without reference to the content. The four-page bibliography on "Persian language sources" shows glaring omissions. On the other hand, it includes a large number of leftist pamphlets that could have been picked up at any stand in any European or American university with a sizable body of Iranian students (there is nothing like slim pamphlets for padding a bibliography, with each 10-page item claiming a separate entry), and a set of very mediocre short monographs, which, I presume, were put at the author's disposal by the amiable former director of Iran Communications and Development Institute. A few weeks ago, I met one of the host of the Iran experts whom Saikal self-legitimatingly thanks in his preface. He could only recall a very general discussion on the procedures for writing a dissertation with a graduate student from Australia who was planning to work on "Iran as a regional power."

Enough has been said to suggest that the publication of *The Rise and Fall of the Shah* by Princeton University Press is nothing short of scandal, albeit, unfortunately, not the only scandal of this kind.

Fereydoun Hoveyda's *The Fall of the Shah* belongs to a different category altogether. Despite the understandable apologetics on behalf of the author's brother, Amir 'Abbas Hoveyda—the shah's most intelligent aide and his prime minister for some 14 years, 'Abbas Hoveyda was executed last April—it is a readable and consistently sound book, and I recommend it without hesitation.

Hoveyda gives us an accurate picture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of the rhythm and the successive stages of the revolutionary upheaval. His account begins with Khomeini's arrival in Paris on October 3, 1978, which brought the relatively obscure exile from his retreat in Iraq into the limelight of the world's mass media. For the shah, as Hoveyda says, this was "the beginning of the end." His account then covers the decisive turning point, the crucial month of November 1978, when the inept military government of General Azhari belied its "military" character by its clumsy and absurdly conciliatory moves, thereby convincing the opposition that the shah was caving in. The ouster of the shah replaced the strict implementation of the Constitution of 1906, which would have curbed the monarch's dictatorial power, as the chief demand of the opposition. (This was a diverse group but one in which non-clerical elements and liberal nationalists nevertheless had considerable weight.) The demand for the ouster of the shah was reaffirmed by the opposition after Carter's remarks on December 7, 1978, which were taken to indicate that the Americans were ditching him. The opposition became unified around this demand. As the National Front leader, Sanjabi, is quoted as having said: "at the beginning of 1978 it took a lot of courage to attack the Shah; now it takes a lot to defend him."

Judiciously inserted flashbacks take the reader over the other salient events of 1978 which formed the immediate background of the collapse of the regime. Stretching further back to 1948, the flashbacks also capture revealing moments in the life of the shah, whose psychological collapse preceded and hastened his fall.

The Fall of the Shah contains a good deal of insight into the shah's personal rule, notably his method of divide and conquer as applied to the military (which method in part explains why the shah's generals, though infuriated by his prolonged indecision, were unable to act decisively either before or after the monarch's departure). It also tells us much about factional rivalries within Iran's governing elite and the persistence of contradictory moves inside the regime which abounded throughout the period of crisis and were seriously damaging to the regime. In particular, they doomed Bakhtiar's ill-fated government from the very beginning: in the early days of January 1979, Bakhtiar's dramatic announcement of the departure of the shah was promptly denied by Zahedi—the shah's former ambassador to the United States and his closest aide during the months of December 1978 and January 1979—from the royal palace. Thus Bakhtiar was deprived of the benefits of any shock effect, and public skepticism increased further. Meanwhile, army officers in a number of provincial cities acted sporadically and on their own initiative, thus undermining the authority of the central government. Another constant theme of the book is the corruption of the rapacious royal family—the shah's brothers and sisters—and we are reminded that one of the first measures taken by the shah in October 1978 to appease a populace enraged by misrule was to establish a "code of conduct" for his family.

The chief interest of the book, however, lies in providing us with a psychological portrait of the shah. As the author points out, for over a decade the shah competently supervised the reform program he had launched in the early 1960s. Then came a "great change," which Hoveyda locates somewhere in the period 1972-74 and describes as "rigidity in his decision making" and "separation from reality." The shah was always aloof and spoke to very few people. But in the 1970s, encouraged by the success of his reforms and assured of support by Nixon, he succumbed to delusions of grandeur. This was reflected in such acts as the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian empire and the change of the calendar from the Islamic to the "Imperial"—basing the calendar on the rise of Cyrus the Great rather than of Mohammed. He fulminated against "the degeneracy of the West" and dreamed of Iran as a new Japan. He became increasingly reliant on his secret police and lost interest in manipulating the political forces in Iranian society. Around this time, according to his prime minister, the author's brother, the shah "stopped listening," and "became immune to Iranian public opinion." From then on, Hoveyda sees "a real iron curtain between him and reality," surrounded as he was by "a court crawling with sycophants."

The shah's new state of mind is reflected in his *Toward the Great Civilization*, a book comparable in originality and depth to Qaddafi's *Green Book* and Khomeini's *Islamic Government*, which the shah conceived in 1976 and published in 1977. Hoveyda, who supervised its translation from Persian into English, shares his collaborators' view of the book as "an outburst of delirium, if not paranoia." A few long excerpts from the book quoted by Hoveyda help us understand "the extent to which the Shah was caught up in a world of his own imagination during the last years of his reign."

His daydreams and increasing divorce from the social realities of Iran resulted in the shah's progressively greater rigidity, which made his fall the harder when the crisis came. The discovery of a Soviet spy network in his army late in March 1978, followed by the pro-Soviet coup in Afghanistan in April 1978, made the shah apprehensive. The unrest in the provincial towns in August and the massive demonstrations of September 1978 turned his megalomania to paranoia. Not comprehending the spontaneity of the popular uprising, nor the threat from the religious opposition, the shah became convinced that the powers—the United States, the Soviet Union, and China!—had come to an agreement to remove him, and pathetically turned to the American ambassador, and to a lesser extent to the British ambassador, for daily advice. As Hoveyda puts it, echoing the words of former treasury secretary Michael Blumenthal, who visited Iran in November 1978, the shah was "not functioning during the last eight months of his reign." He broke down some seven or eight months ahead of his regime.

The factual mistakes in Hoveyda's account are relatively few. In the concluding pages, however, he does manifest a characteristically Iranian obsession—shared by the shah and Khomeini—with foreign plots and plans, and comes up with his own conspiracy theory to explain Iran's Islamic revolution. Hoveyda sees the revolution in Iran as part of a long-term plan masterminded by the United States to destabilize the region and dismember its component countries. Hoveyda's conspiracy theory—worth summarizing because of its widespread acceptance not only among the "white" Iranians but also, increasingly, by the Marxist left—is based on a fallacious assumption and a correct factual assertion. The dubious assumption—buttressed by an untenable and exaggeratedly rosy picture

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of Iran's industrial growth during the reign of the shah and the premiership of the author's brother—is that the West was threatened by Iran's industrialization and decided to install a regime that would favor agriculture and thus keep Iran backward. The naive and fallacious view of the relative merits of industrialization and agricultural development also underlies the mistaken growth strategy implemented by the author's brother, Amir 'Abbas Hoveyda, and his technocratic team during the 1960s and 1970s. The correct fact? Since November 1978, Washington took a Khomeini victory for granted, and in January 1979 an American general, Robert Huyser, was dispatched to Iran to prevent a monarchist coup d'état, and did so successfully.

It takes the fertile Iranian political imagination to construct a conspiracy theory out of these elements. Yet with an American foreign policy badly in need of ideas to give it direction and apparently ready to use force before any such direction is found, and given the existence of ethnic and national minorities in Iran who may well turn to foreign powers for support, this reviewer cannot be certain that Hoveyda's conspiracy theory may not one day be seen as another self-fulfilling prophecy.

Sharif Aranyi

Sharif Aranyi is an Iranian scholar and writer who teaches in the United States. His articles on Iran have appeared in *Dissent* and in a number of scholarly journals.

Lives of the Modern Poets
by William H. Pritchard

Oxford University Press; $13.95)

n his new book William H. Pritchard vrites about nine poets of the first half f this century—the era of literary nodernism—devoting a chapter each to Hardy, Yeats, Robinson, Frost, Pound, liot, Stevens, Crane, and Williams. The st is obvious and sound, given the dual im of the study to provide the non-pecialist reader with an overview of the eriod and to offer revaluations of each ife" for those of us already mired in ast private libraries of criticism on each oet mentioned. Approaching his subcts in a way that is at once personal, amiliar," and thoroughly grounded in ot only the work of each poet but the itical climate surrounding him, ritchard blows a fresh draft of air rough the smoky corridors of contemorary criticism; his example is meant to ntrast—explicitly—with the prevailg mode of academic literary study ntered at the moment in the Yale nglish department.

Pritchard draws wonderful energy om the effort to distinguish his own itical procedures "from certain ndencies in contemporary literary udy" that he finds reprehensible. His troduction crackles with polemics. For m, Samuel Johnson is the ideal critic, and his *Lives* takes more than its homologous title from Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*. Dr. Johnson took for granted that a definite, observable relationship between a poet's life and work naturally existed; terms like "self," "individuality," "tone," and "voice" were assumed to be valid, perhaps too blithely. They certainly were *not* a capitalist trick (as Roland Barthes maintained). Endorsing the validity of his traditional terminology, which is centered on the author's life—his tastes, circumstances, and passions—Pritchard intends to show by practical demonstration that these terms may still take us "further into the literary experience." I think he succeeds, for his *Lives of the Modern Poets* is an immensely readable, engaging, and profound work of critical intelligence and sensibility. Although it has about it something of the old *belles-lettres* approach, it suffers none of the slackness often associated with that genre. Pritchard's focus on each poet is sharp, his methods are rigorous, and he is concerned throughout that literature should be treated as literature and not, as Matthew Arnold warned, as "another thing." In other words, this book will not satisfy those with a taste for the aerial displays of theoretical criticism.

Distinctly earthbound, Pritchard mixes brief biographical accounts of each poet with a close analysis of particular poems, often referring to ancillary letters, diaries, essays, or (as with Hardy and Williams) fiction for additional insights or corroboration. Perhaps because Hardy, Robinson, Crane, and Williams were of slightly less interest to him as poets, he writes less engagingly about their careers, though his essay on Williams, I should add, moves swiftly in the direction of a fresh appraisal of this quintessential American poet whose work, he says, "presents fewer occasions for puzzlement and uncertainty in the critic since his career, in its main lines, is wholly attractive and admirable, also not *a* career." He goes on to show how Williams's dual careers, in poetry and medicine, are of a piece, each informing and reinforcing the other. On Ezra Pound he writes well about the complex relationship between any poet's "career" and the poems themselves; for Pound especially, there is no point to extracting poems from the powerful vortex of insight and opinion created by the man himself. Somewhat diffident in his approach to Pound's eccentric, polyglot *Cantos*, Pritchard is nonetheless respectful of the poetry, urging the reader back to it. He advises: "proceed by impulse, keep the poem handy to pick up and read here and there. It never stays still, never seems quite the same from one time to the next." He pays less attention, thank God, to Robert Frost's "career," the politics of which were largely personal and disagreeable. Instead, he instructs the reader of Frost to "begin and end with something heard," maintaining that Frost is not better than the "sentence by sentence unfolding of the locally special postures he was committed to striking off." Pritchard offers a lucid account of these postures, refusing to be drawn off track by talk about the "pastoral myth" or American humor or post-Romantic revisionism.

Pritchard's view of Yeats reveals a close reading of the poems with an eye trained sharply on the commentators, many of whom see Yeats as either perverse (that is, not in the humanist tradition) or lacking substance. With admirable balance, he lays out the pros and cons for Yeats, concluding that "a mixed response saves us from on the one hand too primly or severely dismissing the bulk of the poems because the man speaking in them is not 'good enough'; on the other . . . remaining wholely caught up and mastered by . . . the

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dramatizing, heroicizing voice." On T. S. Eliot, a poet whose tiny and overly-familiar *oeuvre* lies buried under numbing layers of scholarship, Pritchard lures the reader back into the poems. He writes, for example, of the *Four Quartets*:

> When I turn away from the commentators and read the poem instead, I find myself always caught up and fascinated by certain moments, moving rather quickly over other, familiar ones which no longer challenge me; making one or two connections I hadn't made before; trying to imagine what it would be like to speak in this voice, in these voices—to take Eliot's view of this world and of that other 'reality,' which humankind cannot bear very much of. And I finish the poem convinced that, as with *The Waste Land*, there is nothing like it in modern poetry.

He writes on Wallace Stevens without the sacramental view that afflicts much recent criticism of this excessively "deconstructed" poet, arguing that a great deal of Stevens is repetitious, illogical, and boring; that critics often get so "involved in the taffy" that they will say anything to rescue a little sense from their procedures. Yet he recognizes that getting involved in the taffy is part of seriously reading Stevens, and that in his case it is worth it because of "the interior sound of his imagination," which engenders a poetry "profound enough to last us for a lifetime." He makes an admirable case for Stevens's central place among the moderns.

In short, Pritchard's *Lives* will force most readers to reexamine the work of these nine major poets in the light of his own sharp but soundly-based preferences, although many "professional" critics will object to his preferring one poem to another and to his blatant rejection of the current critical jargon. But for these same reasons I would recommend it to the widest possible audience.

Jay Parini

Jay Parini, who teaches at Dartmouth, is author of *Theodore Roethke: An American Romantic*. His novel *The Love Run* has just been published by Atlantic-Little, Brown.

The American Jeremiad
by Sacvan Bercovitch
(University of Wisconsin Press; $15)

Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age
by George B. Forgie
(Norton; $14.95)

The subject of guilt has been, and remains, a recurrent obsession in America. Both as a nation and as individuals, we seem to oscillate between fantasies of culpability and delusions of innocence. Haunted on the one side by the ghost of Hawthorne's Dimmesdale and on the other by Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, we are simultaneously infatuated with the consequences of sin and enchanted with visions of perfection.

Ralph Waldo Emerson memorialized this psycho-religious schizophrenia of ours by dividing his 19th-century contemporaries into the "Party of Memory" and the "Party of Hope," and these two groups have been drawing critical fire ever since. The nostalgic Americans with their sin-stained memories and their deferential attitude to the past typically are perceived as victims of a Puritan legacy that is held accountable for everything that is bloodless, boorish, and unreal in American life. Their hopeful counterparts usually are seen as childlike optimists—Billy Budd is the type—whose purity of soul is matched by dimness of moral sense. What is rarely discovered by critics of either party, however, is that their differences in the end tend to come to the same thing. Those Americans of rueful conscience enslaved to some image of the past they can neither live up to nor appease are just as narcissistic as the liberated sons and daughters of Adam who are presumably free of the prison house of moral anguish and live for themselves alone. As Alexis de Tocqueville intimated more than a century ago, both are incipient egotists in love with their own image, whether that image be tarnished or immaculate.

One of the rhetorical instruments by which both groups have been censured has come to be called the jeremiad. A polemical form originating in the Old World but transported to the New in the early years of American colonization, the jeremiad initially was conceived as a political sermon delivered on public occasions for the purpose of chastising a backsliding people for their iniquitous ways and reminding them of their Covenant obligations. The form was first isolated and defined by the late New England historian, Perry Miller, who conceived of it as an important early link in the process of Americanization.

For Miller the jeremiad served an essentially negative function. Its objec was to note and thereby attempt t check the spread of sin in the early years of Puritanism's decline. But the New England jeremiads were so effective Miller believed, that instead of arrestin the spread of iniquity, in effect the habituated New Englanders to its ver existence and thus for the first tim made them aware of the actual religiou costs of exposure to New World con ditions.

In this ingenious explanation of th rise of the first American literary forr and the ironic discrepancy between it intention and its effect, Miller made classic case for the cultural uses of guil Through the creation of a ritual form c self-condemnation called the jeremia New England clergymen only succeede in inuring their parishioners to the sir for which they should have been repei tant, thereby hastening the accommod tion of the old Puritan ideal to build ' City upon a Hill" to what Cotton Math called "the American Strand."

Miller's thesis concerning the natu of the jeremiad and its cultural ir plications has been challenged recent in a book of great subtlety and impo tance by Sacvan Bercovitch entitled, n surprisingly, *The American Jeremiad*. Be covitch finds fault with Miller's arg ment not because he went too far, b because he didn't go anywhere near f enough. Where Miller thought t jeremiad was a product of second- a third-generation colonists and th reflected their experience of the decli of the Puritan theocracy, Bercovit shows that the jeremiad arrived with t first wave of Puritan settlers—Jo

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Winthrop's sermon aboard the *Arabella*, "A Model of Christian Charity," just before the landing at Massachusetts Bay in 1630 is the first major American expression of the genre—and that it was already a well-established sermonic form in Europe. Where Miller assumed that the dire warnings contained in the jeremiad were essentially a portent of the decline of faith, Bercovitch argues that these same doom-filled sermons were rather a means of revitalizing it, of keeping alive a sense of the sacred errand and actually renewing it.

However, these disputes concerning the origin and nature of the jeremiad would have little interest for any but historial specialists if it weren't for Bercovitch's additional contention that n joining social criticism to spiritual renewal the jeremiad survived a succession of historical transformations to become the major literary vehicle for the expression of the central American myth. As the principal American ritual of socialization, the jeremiad was the hetorical form by which the 17th-entury Puritan errand was transormed by the 19th century into the acred symbol of America itself. What nce had been the ritual form of a select ew had within two centuries become a tual machine for the spread of national onsensus. And even when the myth at lay at the heart of that ideological onsensus spawned its detractors, the remiad still provided all those inclined rebel against the official American eology with both the terms and the eans to transcend it from within. As ercovitch discerningly remarks, when e American Jeremiahs of the 19th and th centuries thunder against their lture, they simply revolt against merica as it is in order to create in their t a vision of America as it ought to be. Though Bercovitch essentially is out show how the jeremiad contributed to merica's development from a religious lony to a secular middle-class nation, s book also mounts a powerful unter-argument that America's spirit-l history has been not only a move-ent from the sacred to the profane but o a movement from the profane to the cred. One of the periods in which this untermovement reached a nearly fatal otheosis, when public ritualizations of ilt brought the connections between etoric and history into a dangerous w religious intimacy, was the period t prior to the Civil War. Oddly ough, this is a period that has been idied exhaustively from the social, itical, economic, and even cultural points of view but has never received careful psychological scrutiny. This omission now has been rectified by George B. Forgie's daring and largely convincing *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age*.

Like Bercovitch's, Forgie's argument depends on subtlety of interpretation and consistency of analysis rather than abundance of documentation, and like Bercovitch, Forgie is interested less in the sheer fact or incidence of guilt than in the processes of its acculturation, in the way anxiety fuels the rituals of consensus.

Forgie's thesis is deceptively simple. He believes that the antebellum struggle to preserve the Union, and hence the origins of the war itself, cannot be explained solely by reference to sectional differences, the machinations of political parties, or the argument over slavery. Equally crucial is the fact that all the political and cultural leaders of the mid-19th century were born in the years just following the Revolutionary War and grew up in a time when the founding fathers still held sway. The descendents of the fathers thus found themselves living in their shadow and confronted with the paradoxical situation of having to bank the fires of their own ambition out of the needs of filiopiety while at the same time wishing there were some way they might match the fathers' heroic achievement and thus share in the fathers' immortality. To act the part of good sons was to transmit the legacy of the fathers to future generations by preserving intact the house that the fathers had built. But to preserve intact the house that the fathers had built was in effect to deprive themselves of the possibility of heroic action and to settle for a lesser role in history.

Within his generation no one was more sensitive to the psychological intolerability of this situation than Lincoln, who faced up to it for the first time in his "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois" in 1838. Confronted with the question of how to live up to the fathers' heroic ideal while at the same time honoring and preserving their work, Lincoln unconsciously hit upon a solution he would much later, in the 1850s, convert into a social and political strategy of utmost consequence for the future of the Union. Deferential sons still could find heroic work in a post-heroic age, Lincoln dimly sensed, if the fathers' work was endangered by the patricidal ambitions of some other son and it became necessary to step in and rescue it. In Lincoln's scenario, Stephen Douglas became that evil son, and his sponsorship of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which repealed the Missouri Compromise by reopening the territories to slavery, the potentially murderous act. Not that Douglas actually intended to undo the fathers' work—the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence were, after all, ambivalent on the question of slavery, and the Douglas of Lincoln's imagination was surely as much a projection and reification of Lincoln's own hostile feelings as a man consciously antagonistic to the fathers' legacy—but only that he destroyed the middle ground in the sectional conflict and thereby gave expression to fratricidal impulses that had been contained ritualistically for nearly half a century.

In the traditional ritual, which presupposed that the nation could be regarded as a family, the threat that feuding brothers might divide the house could always be averted by the warning that this would only lead to fratricide. But once Douglas had symbolically committed fratricide, a new ritual had to be devised and from 1854 to 1860 Lincoln was its principal architect. In this new ritual the good brothers would band together to punish the evil brother by

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depriving him of power—symbolically killing him. In this way the Union would be saved and the immortal work of the fathers preserved by loyal sons acting out of simple filiopiety.

If this makes the years just preceding the outbreak of actual hostilities sound rather more like art than like life, this is exactly Forgie's point. The crisis of the Union not only resembled a work of art but had been transformed into one at a time when, as Forgie wittily remarks, "drama itself was far gone into what the age referred to negatively as theatricality." But in this increasingly melodramatic era, it was but a short step from realizing that personal ambition could be satisfied only by saving the house the fathers had built to precipitating a crisis that would put the house in jeopardy and provide the requisite opportunity for its heroic defense. At this point, symbolic fratricide carefully structured to confine political tensions within a psychosocial ritual that balanced ambition against guilt, rebellion against filiopiety, gave way to the real thing. And once the ritual collapsed and conflict turned into war, the old republic of the fathers disappeared, to be replaced eventually by the modern, secular, middle-class nation of today.

The sons finally had broken free of the fathers and one day would be able to claim the house for their own, but at a psychological cost, Forgie implies, that very nearly equaled the toll in human suffering and social dislocation. For though the sons had achieved their independence, they had lost forever the heroic world they had tried to preserve through these sentimental tactics of rescue. Far worse, the central figure in this national drama never seems to have realized, or been willing to admit, his own implication in the ensuing ruin. As a result, Lincoln never achieved recognition of his own culpability in this domestic tragedy, and the play's audience, Lincoln's countrymen, never experienced the necessary catharsis.

All of this comes out in an illuminating parallel Forgie draws between the Civil War and *Oedipus Rex*. The main difference between them arises from the fact that Lincoln never perceived the war as in part a retribution for his own patricidal desires but instead saw it finally as divine punishment for sins that in the main the fathers had visited upon the sons. Lincoln's evasion of responsibility in this case was prophetic, even paradigmatic. For if war between the states bought us our independence from the past, we never learned the necessary lessons. Still enthralled by Lincoln's image, as Forgie might well have gone on to note, we remain the victims of Lincoln's example. Unable to deal with our own patricidal fantasies, we sublimate our guilt in the same way that Lincoln, our new father, did: by mastering the art of projecting onto the others the responsibility for our own murderous impulses.

Fussell and Pinsky Honored

The New Republic's poetry editor, Robert Pinsky, and our contributing editor, Paul Fussell, recently received 1980 literary awards from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Giles Gunn

Giles Gunn is professor of religion and American studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His most recent book is *The Interpretation of Otherness: Literature, Religion, and the American Imagination* (Oxford University Press).

Brief Reviews

Mao's People
by B. Michael Frolic

(Harvard University Press; $15)

In 16 vignettes culled from interviews with over 200 Chinese refugees, B. Michael Frolic offers a fascinating panorama of contemporary life in the People's Republic of China. Frolic's informants are from all over China, of all ages, and from all walks of life—they include peasants, workers, soldiers, students, housewives, technicians, translators, even criminals. Hence, for those who wish to gain a sense of the diversity and divisiveness of Chinese life between 1966 and 1974, this book is invaluable.

Although it is now permissible to question the Great Helmsman's wisdom in some matters, during the years Frolic's informants lived in China everyone was expected to relate the thought of Mao to his daily work. In "The Thousand-Dollar Pig," Squad Leader Ho earnestly tries to apply Mao's theory of contradictions to pig raising, concluding that "the reason for our skinny pigs had to be found in one of three areas: the relationship between the pigs and their natural environment (excluding man); the relationship between the cadres and the pigs; and the relationship among the pigs themselves." A hard-working economist in "The One Whose Girlfriend Turned Him In" is upbraided by his superior because his lectures contain no references to Mao's writings on the class struggle.

Amusing and frightening, the China depicted in Frolic's book has a Kafkaesque quality. Like Joseph K., the author's informants have been traduced—by their lovers, or their colleagues, or their own political naiveté. Respectable citizens, like the hard-working economist, wake up one morning to discover that they have become "enemies of the people" and are forced to spend the rest of their days as "broken reeds," fighting charges against them about which they can learn nothing. "Once the Party has decided your fate you can't do much," the economist remarks.

The party's strength, another informant observes, stems in part from the absolute control it maintains over the livelihood of each of the country's one billion citizens. In the world of Frolic's informants, men and women are shunted from one job to another by people they never meet, for reasons they cannot discern. A Shanghai translator in "Frontier Town" is arbitrarily reassigned to tiny Gonghe in remote Qinghai province. After a tiring two week trip, he finds himself in a factory which produces rifles out in the middle of nowhere.

> They had assigned me to that factory principally to translate English-language materials and books on automatic and semiautomatic rifles. The materials were mostly American. How they wound up in Gonghe, in the depths of China, was a mystery to me. . . . Why were they sent to this way-out place to be translated? No one ever knew.

From *Mao's People* one can get a good grasp of the social problems that continue to vex China's leadership in the age of transition. And along the way one will meet a galaxy of interesting citizens like Widow Wang, who "occupies" a large, empty apartment in open defiance of the Housing Administration in its "fight against bureaucracy"; Count Bumpkin, who, unable to adjust to civil life, continues to speak too loudly and eat her meals squatting on the stoop; and the Imitation General, a young

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model worker who during the Cultural Revolution becomes transformed into a power-hungry radical who terrorizes his colleagues. Altogether, these portraits are so fresh, so poignant, and so exquisitely "human" that after finishing this absorbing book one feels like one of Frolic's informants who, looking back on his life in the "motherland," doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Joey Bonner

Joey Bonner is a researcher at the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University.

Real Property by Sara Davidson

(Doubleday; $10.95)

Credit Sara Davidson, at least, with increased efficiency. Her first (and only previous) book, *Loose Change*, a look at the 1960s through the eyes of the author and two of her friends, didn't appear until 1977; now, only five months after the 1970s have ended, she's given us the word on that peculiar decade. At this rate her book on the 1980s should be out in time for the primaries of 1984.

Davidson's alacrity is understandable: *Real Property* is a collection of previously published magazine articles that wanted only a binding and a dedication to become a book. In a way, it's justifiable as well, because of the nature of this peculiar business of decade-labeling. It began in earnest, it seems to me, around 1970, when throngs of people began talking about what the 1960s meant. Then they started talking about what the 1950s meant; and then about what the 1970s would mean. All this analysis relied to a remarkably heavy degree on journalism. Normally, in trying to discern a particular *Zeitgeist*—say, of Victorian England—one examines all kinds of things: art, literature, economics, philosophy, the moral life of the people. But decade-watching is so circumscribed by date that it naturally favors the more palpable, but sometimes deceptive, cosmos of newspaper headlines and video images.

And so it is with *Real Property*. Most of the pieces were written in the first half of the decade—a time when Davidson was convinced, she wrote in *Loose Change*, that "I had to be published in every magazine and have an article out every month or I would fade." The subjects range widely—the rock group Rhinoceros, a Utah polygamist, a family in Allende's Chile, Jacqueline Susann, a profile of Baba Ram Dass/Richard Alpert—but all of them are skillfully treated in the late-new-journalism style. Davidson is especially proficient in the ticklish, and crucial, matter of reportorial presence: she frequently makes an appearance in her pieces, but rarely an unwelcome or obtrusive one.

Yet ultimately one resents journalism about discrete events and people that masquerades, by implication, as cultural analysis. (In *Loose Change*, personal history put on the same disguise.) No less than a sonnet, a slick magazine piece follows a prescribed form. It should concern some *au courant* or hitherto unexplored phenomenon, it should move, and it should end with a striking, portentous quotation or scene. The genre is fine as far as it goes. But it has trouble with the deeper strains of a culture which don't necessarily lend themselves to current events, gripping narrative, or spicy quotations.

In the title piece, though, Davidson transcends the form. "Real Property," written in 1979, is about living in Venice, California, amid insanely spiraling real estate prices and what is either decadence or a very close facsimile, and it is personal journalism of a high order. The name it calls to mind is Joan Didion (an undistinguished Q-and-A with whom—"Do you consider yourself sad or depressed?"—is included in the book). As in Didion's non-fiction, the attention to detail creates a tension that feeds the terse, strategically placed kickers. In "Real Property," if not *Real Property*, Sara Davidson displays a voice and a theme that don't seem out of place on uncoated paper.

Ben Yagoda

Ben Yagoda is a New York writer.

John D.: The Founding Father of the Rockefellers by David Freeman Hawke

(Harper & Row; $12.95)

Rockefeller. The very name suggests bloated wealth, rapacious business practices—a sinister robber baron whose legacy of corporate greed still surrounds us. Who was this man reputed to be the most vilified person in American history? To Ida Tarbell, who observed him at age 66 from the back pew of his Cleveland Baptist church, he seemed "the oldest man in the world, a living mummy." The face reflected "concentration, cruelty and craftiness"; his nose resembled "a thorn between puffy cheeks." He exhibited "a lipless mouth," vacant eyes, a head "swept bare of hair, flesh diseased and unclean." He approximated "a dead jelly fish" and generally "there was something altogether repulsive about him."

Though Tarbell's venom still may set liberal knees to jerking, it reveals nothing of this enigmatic figure who became the world's first billionaire of record. Preferring quiet scholarship to the cacophony of the muckraker, Professor Hawke presents a portrait of his subject that is as complex as his previously acclaimed biographies of Paine and Franklin.

What emerges is a driven young man who, trained by a rakish father to excel in the art of finance, grew to equate economic conquest with masculinity. At 16 he left home to earn his way as a clerk/bookkeeper in a commission house only to open his own business three years later. The enterprise flourished through the singleminded devotion to efficiency that became John D.'s trademark. Quick to perceive the future implicit in Drake's discovery of oil in western Pennsylvania, Rockefeller entered the refining business. Through clever borrowing, skillful speculation, and timely collaboration with Jay Gould's railroad line, John D.'s obsession now became the oil partnership that vaulted Cleveland past Pittsburgh as the nation's refining center. He soon absorbed the local independents, and Standard Oil was born in 1870. The press dubbed him the "Mephistopheles of Cleveland" and termed his maneuver a "massacre." Yet his coup was the result of an organizational acumen that simply outflanked his competitors.

The strongarm methods came later. Even then he remained convinced that whatever actions were necessary to consolidate the oil industry under his grand design only spared the national economy the wastefulness of unlimited competition. That his detractors cried "restraint of trade" merely exposed their ignorance of the "higher law" of sound management.

Standard Oil came to dominate over 90 percent of the industry and John D. went into semi-retirement, a millionaire

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at age 36. Profits pyramided and Rockefeller, averaging approximately $750 per hour, was the epitome of opulence and thus typecast as the quintessential villain. Other tycoons became benefactors for their charitable contributions; John D.'s donations were "tainted."

Yet he remained a romantic, comparing his daring with Napoleon and saving every newspaper clipping about himself. Hawke cautions, "To say that he had only a bookkeeper's mind or that he was obsessed with money ignores something central in the character of this quiet, silent revolutionary: a passion for glory."

Despise or admire him, one must concede that John D.'s financial acuity defies comparison. In Hawke's perceptive study this mythic figure is considerably larger than the sum of the epithets that have been directed against his name.

Alan L. Miller

Alan L. Miller is a freelance writer.

The Collected Stories of Jean Stafford by Jean Stafford

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $17.50, $8.95 paper)

The reissuance of *The Collected Stories of Jean Stafford* is a welcome event. These 30 stories, which constitute most of her short fiction, were published between World War II and the late 1960s. They are not arranged chronologically, and often there is little telling, save where the stories themselves offer temporal clues, when a particular story was written. For there are few signs of hesitancy or gawkiness in the earlier stories, and few of rigidity or inanition in the later. From first to last, Jean Stafford was a confident master of the form.

What makes her work so rewarding is in part her flair for the particular, the vivid detail. When Maggie Meriweather, "the prettiest raconteur of middle Tennessee," attends a party at a French manor, we are not told simply that her host is unimaginably rich, but that at a previous party "there had actually been jousting and tilting, the knights being jockeys from Longchamp in papier-mâché armor executed by Christian Dior." Stafford's dialogue often shows a quirky perfection, like the student at Harrow who announces, "I'm a fauna man, not a flora man." Yet her greatest gift, and what made her a nonpareil of sorts, was her complex yet seemingly effortless use of language. Her language was an odd, unpromisingly heterogeneous mix: homespun colloquialisms ("chockablock," "spang in the middle," "flibbertigibbet"), long and sometimes obscure latinisms ("logorrhea," "machicolations"), sprinklings of French and German, unadorned monosyllables (a wailing child's mouth as "a rent of woe"), and clichés, which she somehow re-burnished as if newly minted (zoo monkeys "swinging by their gifted tails on the flying trapeze, screaming bloody murder"). She had a poet's love of musical sound. The stories abound in rhymes ("pillowing, billowing snow," "the rambling, shambling house"), homonyms ("we rode and rowed and climbed and fished"), and dozens of near-rhymes and near homonyms ("heavy, heady smells," "a pin or a pain," "stricken and sickened," "violent violet peaks").

All of these virtues—the sharp details, the bright dialogue, the inimitable language—are present in "Beatrice Trueblood's Story," in which beautiful but penniless Beatrice, engaged to marry a "rich and reliable" man, wakes up to discover she's gone deaf overnight. We are told of Beatrice's coming misfortune at the outset, and then are offered a variety of perfectly evoked noises ("the quick, cleaving roar of an invisible jet," "a power mower nasally shearing the grass," a Siamese cat emitting an "ugly parody of a human cry"), which quietly accumulate to render still more horrific that moment when Beatrice herself discovers the truth.

Sudden deafness, this time feigned and humorous, also arises in "Bad Characters," in which the irresistible Emily Vanderpool, who disarmingly confesses that she has a bad character and can get into Camp Fire Girls only "through pull," is accomplice to a shoplifter. Her co-criminal, Lottie Jump, convincingly plays deaf and dumb when she is caught jamming her swag (a string of pearls) under her hat, and it is Emily who is seized and set before Judge Bay, a pompous old man of superlative awfulness.

I have one tentative complaint, or doubt, about this collection. Although Jean Stafford apparently wrote few stories between the original appearance of this book and her death a year ago, she did publish in 1978 a story in the *New Yorker* which brimmed with her characteristic gifts (like the drunken poets who go "soddenly to bed"), and another, posthumous story appeared in *Shenandoah*. It would be a shame if whatever short fiction she wrote or published in the last decade of her life were to go ungathered. A future reissuance of her collected stories would be, one hopes, a slightly fatter volume. Until that time, however, the stories of this collection will have to speak for her—which they do splendidly, in a voice at once graceful, tart, wise, and winsome.

Brad Leithauser

Brad Leithauser is a writer and poet.

Correspondence, *from page 3*

it seems to me a major magazine of the liberal left could expand its world view to include solutions to our present short-term economic problems that come to grips with the somewhat pressing constraints of the medium- to long-term. Expanding productivity is just another term for greater growth. This path will be seen increasingly as a luxury of a world of abundant resources, cheap energy, and few people.

Harvey E. Rich
California State University
Northridge, California

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To the editors:
If, indeed, the hostage rescue mission would be marked in our memories only by its cancellation due to numerous "mistakes," your May 10 cover would be a great one. However, the unfortunate deaths of eight men (in wreckage disturbingly similar to your inverted helicopter) and the respect their sacrifice deserves seem to have been overlooked by you in favor of the extremely clever cover design.

The analogy between a rare misprinted stamp and the aborted mission is very poor lampoon.

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Kim Archer
Boston, Massachusetts

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Cambridge Diarist

The Tony Awards

You would think that Jimmy Carter had called Cyrus Vance a traitor, or at least an idiot, for all the fuss my Cambridge neighbor, Anthony Lewis, and lots of other journalists made over the president's recent, relatively mild public criticism of the former secretary of state. Lewis devoted one entire column on the *New York Times*'s op-ed page to what he called President Carter's "petulant put-down of the man who had lent his Administration dignity"—as if one cautious Wall Street lawyer was all it would take. And, in that lachrymose style so distinctly his own, he went on to lament that "the unworthy crack hurt only its author, making him look small." Well, I'd always thought this particular author, that is to say the president, *was* small, despite Lewis's protestations to the contrary. Lewis still insists that Carter is "highly intelligent" and that he also has "good values." So what did Carter say that was so awful about this departing servant? He said that Ed Muskie would be "much stronger . . . more statesmanlike . . . a more evocative spokesman. . . ." If such squeamish phrases can upset Cyrus Vance and provoke his partisans to howling, it's no wonder they have little stomach for confronting the Russians. But, on the evidence, that's not what Lewis most wants from a secretary of state. Vance's greatest passion, it seemed, was to turn the conduct of US foreign policy into something like a leisured legal practice. Lawyers like Vance are schooled not to hurry, which is one reason why the hostage families have had to learn the virtues of forbearance. Lewis is enamored of the lawyer class. International conflict, unhappily, is not one big contract negotiation in which everything has a price and everything can be settled amicably, with a nice lunch at the Metropolitan club afterward.

"The Philadelphia episode," Lewis continued in the same column, "did no harm to Cyrus Vance, who despite all the problems will be remembered for restoring honor and humanity to his office after the gauleiter years." *Gauleiter*? In its first and only appearance, the *gauleiter* enters history in a Nazi party uniform, functioning as ideological policy chief of German's *gaus*, or provinces. Dr. Robert Ley was *gauleiter* of Cologne, Albert Forster *gauleiter* of Danzig, Paul Joseph Goebbels *gauleiter* of Berlin, Heinrich Himmler *gauleiter* without territorial portfolio or jurisdictional limit. Lewis's smarmy crack will not harm Henry Kissinger who, born and raised in Furth, outside Nuremberg, knows something about *gauleiters*. His father, in fact, was once physically set upon by the notorious Julius Streicher, *gauleiter* of Franconia. Not many of us have felt the *gauleiter*'s brutal hand so close. Maybe Lewis doesn't understand about *gauleiters*. That's at least a charitable explanation of how the word trips so casually from his typewriter. The fascist analogy comes cheap. I once was at a benefit on the Cape on behalf of the Harrisburg Eight. After Sister Elizabeth McAllister, now Mrs. Daniel Berrigan, had exhorted the assembled to put their "bodies on the line against fascism," some shill got up to assure them that their bodies were not wanted, but their cash was, and that this would be tax-deductible through some foundation or other. This was the era when our most privileged children spelled the name of our country *Amerika*. Lewis's *gauleiter* allusion to Kissinger comes from a similar mentality, one more inclined to abuse than argument.

I don't come to Kissinger's defense out of some sense that he can't defend himself. But the gang-up on Kissinger right now is ideologically all-inclusive and indiscriminate. If anything, some in the Reagan cohort have much worse things to say about him than Lewis. Worse even than George Ball, who seems animated by that most understandable of motives, resentment: Kissinger was secretary of state and Ball was not. Senior partner at Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb, he gives no sign that crying all the way from 1 William Street, corner of Wall, to the bank salves the hurt. James Akins, the former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, is the latest to go public among those who need Kissinger as a scapegoat for the nation's ills. Kissinger fired Akins when he found him unable to distinguish the interests of the Wahabi dynasty from those of the US and Western democracies. Most particularly, he was distressed to hear Akins cheerleading for Saudi caprice with oil prices and levels of oil production. Akins, now employed as a consultant to the petro-multinationals dependent on Riyadh, went on "60 Minutes" to argue (along with Ball) that Kissinger colluded with the shah to raise oil prices in 1973 with hardly a word about the fact that, at the time, the Saudis had initiated a boycott of the US and Holland and cut production besides. Akins's need to project his own support for Saudi price-gouging onto Kissinger and the shah's price-gouging is a common enough psychological ploy; it deserves no respect.

What country, I asked a wise friend, is the *Nation* magazine attacking for violating civil liberties? Egypt, he answered, with that swift confidence born of observing the *gauchiste* mind defining its enemies. Sadat's basic crime, of course, was to have become the first defector from the third world to the West, allying his people's destiny with ours. When he concluded a peace with Israel that the left said couldn't work—and, moreover, shouldn't work—he earned himself the scrutiny on human rights to which folks like the editors of the *Nation* don't ordinarily submit, let's say, Syria or Iraq, who've cast their warring lots with the Soviet Union. Sadat's critics are not, after all, deep believers in the idea of many voices; pluralism is scarcely their thing. Indeed, this particular anti-Sadat article doesn't discuss the situation of the one group that the Cairo government is actively repressing, the Copts. Worrying about Christians isn't what progressives do. The article appeared in a week when there were demonstrations against Sadat's policies in several major Egyptian cities, all undisturbed by the police. A common enough occurrence. But Sadat does run a mildly authoritarian state, though not one that in this world cries out for special outrage. Unless, that is, you care for Sadat's enemies, a motley mixture of Islamic fundamentalists (mostly members of the Moslem Brotherhood) with old Nasserites, new Marxists, and déclassé intellectuals—much like the assortment now providing the chaos in Iran. Which brings me back to that Tony Lewis column again. One of Lewis's grievances against Jimmy Carter was that "he produced the joint Soviet-American declaration on the Middle East with a flourish and then walked away from it." It wasn't Carter who walked away from it. It was Sadat who walked away from it, by leaping over generations of hatred and going to Jerusalem. Would peace, he seemed to ask himself, or the interests of the Egyptian people be served by legitimating a Soviet role in the conflict between Israel and the Arabs? No, Sadat answered courageously. Lewis apparently thinks otherwise, and so too does Brzezinski.

M.P.

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